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McLEAN

A ROMANCE OF THE WAR

JOHN BEATTY

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McLEAN

A ROMANCE OF THE WAR

JOHN BEATTY

COLUMBUS, OHIO:
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1904

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To the Memory of

COLONEL EDWARD M. DRISCOLL, WHOSE ACCOUNT OF HIS CAPTURE, IMPRISONMENT AND ESCAPE WHILE A CAPTAIN OF THE THIRD OHIO VOLUNTEER INFANTRY SUGGESTED THIS STORY.

I

A FREIGHT train laden in part with federal prisoners, pulled out of Salisbury at two o'clock on the morning of October —, 1864. Its destination was Richmond. A cold, drizzling rain had set in during the afternoon of the preceding day, and still continued. For two or three hours after starting the darkness was intense, but now for the first time since the journey began the open fields and cultivated farms could, by careful observation, be distinguished from the darker lines of the forest.

While crossing a level, sandy tract two of the prisoners sprang forward, threw up the crossed bayonets of the guards, and leaped from the train. They had scarcely struck the ground when the sharp reports of two muskets were heard, succeded by shots from a dozen others.

The train was stopped and soldiers, lighted on their way by lamps, returned to the place where the disturbed surface

of the sand indicated that the fugitives had fallen, then staggered to their feet, and finally found refuge in the dense shadow of the adjacent woods. After a delay of perhaps ten minutes, the search was abandoned, and the train moved forward.

The men who had acquired freedom by this perilous leap, felt their way slowly into the forest, and when it became fairly light, pushed westward at rapid pace. Soon after sunrise they entered a fertile region where houses and cultivated fields were not infrequent.

They were young men, and it had been some time — some months in fact — since they had partaken of a substantial meal. The violent exercise of the morning had, therefore, awakened in them a vigorous desire for food. Approaching the line of settlements, but still pursuing their way in the forest, they soon came near a field of corn, and before they had passed by it, discovered a negro stripping husk from the ears.

The shorter, but evidently not the younger of the fugitives, whispered his companion

to stand, while he should reconnoiter the premises, and if prudent to do so, speak to the workman. When the latter was told that two escaped union soldiers desired food, a gleam of good feeling lighted up his dark face, and picking up the basket containing the lunch brought with him to the field, he asked:

"Whar de udder one?"

"Just beyond the fence in the woods."

Accompanying the white man to the place indicated, the negro surrendered his sweet potatoes and bacon to them with great cheerfulness, but the taller of the fugitives, as if troubled over the matter in some way, before partaking of the food, asked:

"Shall we not be robbing you of your dinner, my good fellow?"

"No, sah;" replied the slave, "I pray de Lo'd dat no harm-kotch yer; dat ez dinner nuff for me, sah."

"You can get more?"

"Yasser, yasser, dis nigger aint gwinter starve fo' night; 'possum en hoe cake plenty, sah."

It was not a full meal for two healthy and hungry young men, but compared

with some repasts they had recently been obliged to be content with, it was most luxurious and they rose from it strengthened and thankful.

"How far is it to the Blue Ridge?" asked the shorter man, turning to the negro.

"Ter de mountings, sah? Dunno sah; long stretch; nebber been dar, sah; dat dar road yander side de co'n fiel' goes ober de Yadkin ribber, sah, en on ter Wilkesboro, en de mounting ez furder on. Fokes goes ter Ten'essy dat dar way, sah, en hab ter clomb de mountings fer ter git dar, sah."

Bidding the negro good bye, and thanking him for his kindness, the fugitives now started westward, keeping still in the woodlands, but within sight of the open fields.

About noon the sky became clear, and they caught glimpses of the sun through openings in the foliage. In many places underbrush, fallen timber, and spreading vines rendered their progress slow and laborious; but as if to compensate them somewhat for the trouble occasioned by these obstacles, clusters of wild grapes were found, here and there, which to their vigorous appetites were very acceptable.

Reaching an open space where the sunlight fell pleasantly on a patch of green sward, they stopped to rest. For one of these fugitives, at least, the freedom of the woods, pure air and sunshine were luxuries of which he had, of late, known little. During a year of prison life he had spent four months in a dungeon. The confederate authorities had been holding him under a retaliatory threat, and the rebel officer with whom his destiny was thus linked, having been executed as a spy, he was to be hung or shot at four o'clock to-morrow, and was being conveyed to Richmond for that purpose when he jumped from the train.

The two men had not closed their eyes during the preceding night, and had been too long accustomed to dangers of one sort and another to allow those by which they might now be surrounded to interfere with their strong desire for sleep. They therefore, soon became oblivious to the trials of the past, the perils of the present, and the uncertainties of the future.

When the fugitives awoke, the level beams of the setting sun were glinting through the forest. They had spent more

time sleeping than they intended, and the shorter man springing to his feet, said impatiently:

"We should have been ten miles farther on our way, Captain Northrup. We have slept too long."

"We shall feel all the better for it," responded Northrup, "and can now push on till morning."

It soon grew quite dark in the woods, and the fugitives diverged to the left with a view to taking the open fields which skirted the public highway, when it should become safe to do so. The moon was now up, but as yet its beams were obstructed by the forest; an hour later, however, when the two men had abandoned the woods and were pushing rapidly on through the open fields, the soft light which fell around them, and the thought that every step took them nearer to home and friends, filled their hearts with pleasure, and frames with strength.

At eight o'clock as nearly as the time could be conjectured, they ventured to take the road which, although far from smooth, was preferable to the weeds, grass and un-

even surface of the fields. In one or two instances while passing farm houses they were annoyed by the noisy vigilance of dogs; but their progress was not interrupted, and being armed with heavy clubs, they felt reasonably confident in their ability to defend themselves successfully against either beast or man in any contest at all likely to occur during the night, in a farming country, many miles from military posts.

About eleven o'clock they climbed a rail fence, and went to an isolated hut which stood some little distance from the road. The knock which the shorter man made on the door failed for some time to elicit any response, but being repeated frequently, a woman's voice finally cried out,

"Who makin' all dat racket on de do'?"

"A friend."

"Who ez de frien' ?"

"Come to the door so that I can talk with you."

"Gor way; don' trouble niggas dis time o' night.

"But I must see you; I've lost my way and want you to put me right."

"Whar gwine?"

"Yadkin river."

"Foller de plain road ter de wes'."

"But I am turned round; open the door and direct me."

A heavy wooden bar was now partly withdrawn, and the door opened far enough to disclose the face of the colored woman with whom the conversation had been carried on. Relying upon the good feeling which her race almost invariably manifested toward the soldiers of the union army, the man now informed her quietly that he was a federal officer, endeavoring to make his way north, and prompted by hunger rather than by a desire to obtain information, he had taken the liberty to disturb her at this unseasonable hour.

His accent indicated to the acute ear of the woman that he was not of southern birth, while his person, which the moon afforded sufficient light to reveal, corroborated her conjecture and his statement. The door was thrown open, and he invited to enter.

A middle-aged negro man who thus far had said nothing, now appeared, and to him the officer narrated as quickly as possible

the manner of his escape, the incidents of the day, and the fact that his companion was on the outside awaiting the result of this adventure. Northrup was at once called in; the coals on the hearth raked together, and a few pine knots placed on them. The blaze which soon lighted up the cabin, revealed a rough table, two benches, and a bed in which children were sleeping.

When the meal was prepared and placed on the table, the officers attacked the food like men whose appetites had not of late been dulled by over-feeding. The corn bread was sweet, and the meat wonderfully tender and juicy. The negro and his wife saw the victuals disappear with as much genuine satisfaction, probably, as the most hospitable host and hostess ever experienced. Before withdrawing from the table Captain Northrup, turning to the negro, asked:

"What's your name?"

"Tom — Co'nel McKorkle's nigger, sah."

"Well Tom, I never ate a meal which afforded me more real enjoyment than this. I think the roast the tenderest and most palatable I ever tasted. What kind of meat is it, Tom?"

"Hit's 'possum, sah," replied Tom laughing; "kotched him dis ebenin', sah."

"Opossum," exclaimed Northrup, to whom the idea of eating opossum was certainly novel, and possibly not altogether agreeable.

"Yasser, yasser; hit's berry good and fat, sah."

"Well," continued Northrup, "It's the first time I ever had the pleasure of dining on opossum."

"Nebber eat 'possum meat 'fore," exclaimed Tom incredulously, while Tom's wife laughted outright.

"Never," said Northrup.

"Lo'd sakes, massa, w'at part de country yo' lib, dat yo' nebber eat no 'possum 'fore?"

"Captain Northrup lives in Boston," his companion answered, "where they have none of the luxuries of life. It's a sort of God-forsaken town, and yet, strange to tell, they think it the best place in world. Do you know where Boston is, Tom?"

"Bostian," said Tom quickly, "Dat dar town's ober on de udder side de Yadkin

ribber, sah, in Rowen county, sah; dar's 'possums dar, suahly sah."

"Not a 'possum in Boston, Tom. It's a good place for people to come away from, but a bad place to live."

"Grashus," exclaimed Tom, and then sobering up suddenly under some new thought, he asked, "How it come dat Cap'n Northrup is a Yankee officer, if he lib in Bostian; de Rowen county folks ez purty bad sesesh, sah?"

"Tom," said Captain Northrup, who evidently thought his comrade was making no good return for the poor negro's hospitality, "Captain Lindsay has been indulging in a little harmless pleasantry at my expense. My home is Boston, a city in the state of Massachusetts, many hundreds of miles away. I was captured in Virginia by the rebels, and am now, with my friend here, trying to get back to the union army."

The negro, although alarmed for an instant, was now fully satisfied. He perceived on second thought that the men before him had neither the accent nor manner of southern gentlemen, and made haste to

atone for his momentary suspicion by saying, solemnly:

"I pray de Lo'd dat yo' git safe en suah back ter dat army agin. We ez pore igrant niggas down hyre, sah, but we know dat yo' uns ez a fightin' fer de black man, sah, an' we ez prayin' fer yer night en day."

The earnestness of the negro affected Northrup, and with a voice full of tenderness, he said:

"Tom, the time is not far distant when every colored man shall be free; you are in fact now no longer legally bound to servitude. President Lincoln has by proclamation emancipated you. Sherman with a great army is sweeping through Georgia like a whirlwind. Grant is to-day thundering against the fortifications of Richmond, and the whole confederacy, with its accursed institution of slavery, is toppling to its fall."

This language may have been somewhat above the comprehension of the negro, but he understood enough of it to exclaim, "Hallelujah."

"You and your good wife," continued Northrup, "will soon be permitted to go

hence, or remain here, as it pleases you. Your children will never know what it is to be slaves. You will labor for yourselves, obtain homes of your own, and will have schools and churches. The night is far spent, Tom; the dawn is upon you, and the sun of a better life is now rising for you and your race."

"Har de man, Hannah," shouted Tom; "de day ob jubilee hab come, ho! ho!"

"Captain Northrup," said Lindsay, we should be going. "How far is it, Tom, to the Yadkin river?"

"Short stretch, sah; mought be two miles, sah."

"Shall we have any trouble in getting across?"

"Ferry boat dar, sah; boy w'at pulls it ober may be 'sleep dis time night, sah."

"Is he black or white?"

"O, he black, sah; de niggers do all de hard work in dis country, sah."

Northrup here took a scrap of paper from his pocket, and with a pencil wrote very plainly:

"CAPTAIN HENRY NORTHRUP,
"or MRS. ELEANOR NORTHRUP,
"17 Beacon Street, BOSTON, MASS.
"Tom McKorkle and Hannah, his wife, fed me when hungry. Davidson Co. en route to Wilkesboro, and near the Yadkin river, N. C."

Handing this to Tom, he said, "When the war ends get some friend who can write to inclose this piece of paper to the address you find on it. If living, I shall get it, and you will hear from me; if dead my mother will get it, and you will hear from her."

As the officers now turned to depart they were followed by a solemn, "God bress yo' an' be wid yo,' an' take keer ob yo,'" from Tom McKorkle and his wife.

It was nearly midnight when they reached the road and turned westward. They hoped to reach the Yadkin in less than an hour, and to cross it before morning; but in a few minutes they heard the clatter of horses' feet on the road behind them. Concluding at once that a detachment of cavalry had been dispatched from Salisbury or Lexington for their recapture, they hastily climbed the fence and ran across the open field to the woods.

II

THE RESCUE

BEFORE Lindsey and Northrup had fairly gained the cover of the forest, four mounted men went dashing down the road at a speed which indicated that their mission demanded the utmost haste. The horses were flecked with foam, and their gait was evidently prompted by the spur rather than by any eagerness of their own. When the party reached the river the leader of it called across impatiently:

"Ferryman! Ho! yo' nigger, shove the boat over."

Riding close to the margin of the stream the horsemen peered over the dark waters to ascertain if in the still deeper shadows of the great trees which lined the other shore, there was anything to denote that the command had been heard by the person for whom it was intended; but as they discovered nothing, and heard no response, the leader became very emphatic in his denun-

ciation of ferrymen in general and of this Yadkin ferryman in particular.

"Ferry-boat-ho, confound yo' are yo' deaf?" Still all was silent beyond the stream.

"Captain Locke," said the youngest of the party, addressing the leader, "Joe's cabin is on the right of the road, under the shadow of a large oak. Possibly if I were to fire my carbine it would arouse him."

"All right, Brevar; fire!"

The report of the gun had scarcely died away when a voice shouted back:

"Who shoot dat dar gun?"

"We did, you lazy scoundrel," answered Captain Locke, "and if yo' don't shove the boat over double-quick we'll put a volley into yo'."

"Don't done dat, massa, for de Lo'd sake; dis nigger 'll fotch de boat."

"What time o' night is it, Brevar?" asked Captain Locke.

The young man took out his watch, and striking a match, replied: "One o'clock, sir."

"How far beyond the river is the house where we are expected to find McLean?"

"Three miles, sir."

"Is yo'r home in Davie County, Brevar?"

"O no, sir; my father resides in Iredell, but I know much of Davie. I have hunted all over it, and have many relatives there. In fact, the lady at whose house McLean is reported to be stopping is the widow of my uncle.

"Why I thought her McLean's sister," exclaimed the captain.

"So she is, sir; but she is also the widow of Alexandar Brevar, my father's deceased brother."

"Do yo' know McLean?"

"Very well. The grandfather of Davy McLean came to North Carolina more than a century ago from Scotland. His family is an old one, sir. They trace their lineage back many centuries, and have the traditional achievements of the clan to which their ancestors belonged at their tongue's end. Davy is a thorough Scotchman, and I think takes great delight in the border warfare with which for the past three years he has been identified."

"But why does he venture into Davie?"

"McLean would venture anywhere, sir; and besides he had a large plantation in Davie, on which he resided until our men burned his houses and barns in 1861. He has also many friends there; in fact, I think between the river here and the Blue Ridge, his friends outnumber his foes."

"Are these friends personal or political?"

"Both, sir. What is called the union sentiment is as strong in the extreme western part of North Carolina as it is in the eastern part of Tennessee; but Davy McLean has many personal friends among those even whose devotion to the confederacy is unquestioned. He and my father, for instance, were boys together, as were their fathers before them; nothing on earth could diminish the respect and friendship which they entertain for each other. McLean was outspoken and bitter in his hostility to secession, but he did not lift a hand in favor of the north until some time after the battle of Bull Run. My father says the secessionists of west North Carolina committed many excesses then, which they have paid for very dearly since, and the destruc-

tion of Davy McLean's property has cost Iredell, Wilkes and Watauga many times its value."

"It is certain," replied Captain Locke, "that he and his friends, if all reports are true, have been raising the devil on the border between No'th Ca'liny and Ten'essy fo' years."

The boat had now reached the shore and the horsemen riding on to it, soon disembarked on the other side. As the squad went clattering over the hill, the ferryman muttered to himself:

"Dar's some devilment gwine on suah. Dem sesesh ez not ridin' dis time o' night fer fun. I hope dey breaks dar necks, dat's all de harm dis nigga wishes dem."

Lindsay and Northrup, after hiding in the woods for an hour, concluded finally to feel their way cautiously to the river, and determine whether it would be advisable to attempt to reach the opposite shore before daylight. They did not venture to take the road again, but kept as near to it as possible. It was very dark under the trees and their progress was slow and difficult. More than once they became utterly

bewildered, and lost much valuable time in getting their true direction.

It was fully three o'clock in the morning when they reached the bank of the river. Turning squarely to the left now, they proceeded cautiously toward the road they had abandoned, and finally discovered a light before them. Feeling their way stealthily they soon came with a suddenness which almost took their breath, to within a few feet of five men.

The soldiers of Captain Locke's detachment, having unsaddled their horses for rest and food, had kindled a fire, and were now partaking of a lunch. Their guns lay in a heap near the saddles, and some little distance away sat a prisoner with his hands tied behind his back.

Addressing the party before him the prisoner said.

"It was hardly fair, gentlemen, to pounce down on a man at dead of night and assault him, when in his bed, unarmed."

"We are compelled to take some men whenever and wherever we can find them," replied Captain Locke, sternly. "Spies, bush-whackers and traitors to their state,

sah, are entitled to no consideration, and deserve nothing but a rope or a bullet."

"I am neither; I have been true to my country, sir. I have never fought otherwise than in an honorable and manly way."

"Yo' are a union man?"

"I am, and my fathers were before me."

"Yo' have been untrue to yo'r state?"

"I have been faithful to the best interests of my state."

"Yo' have fought against the confederate army?"

"Because it was made up of the enemies of my country, and warring against the flag under which my father and my grandfather fought. And Frank Brevar," continued the prisoner turning to the young man, "I regret to see you here, my boy. Your great-grandfather and my grandfather stood shoulder to shoulder under the old flag at Guilford court house. You have brought disgrace upon an honored name."

"Mr. McLean," replied the young man with dignity, "it would do no good to discuss the questions about which we differ. I am a soldier; it is not the part of a soldier to say whither he will go, and where

he will not. It is his duty to obey. I am here in obedience to orders, and have done simply what my oath required me to do. I have said no word of unkindness to you, sir, and shall have none to say."

"Where do you propose to take me?"

"To Salisbury, sah," responded Captain Locke.

"You will not keep me long. Sherman's army will be there before many days."

"It must be there very soon to render you any service."

"Do you mean to murder me, sir?"

"We mean to try yo' befo' a drumhead court martial, convict yo' by unimpeachable testimony of being a spy, hang yo' and send yo' to h—l double quick. That's what we propose to do with yo', sah."

"The men who sit as judges on such a court," retorted McLean hotly, "will be traitors; the men who bear testimony there will be perjured villians. The man who executes the sentence of the court will be the vilest miscreant outside of hell; and the man who talks thus to one who is unarmed and defenceless is a brutal, cowardly assassin."

"Retract that," thundered Captain Locke, springing to his feet, "or I'll cut yo'r insolent lying tongue out of yo'r head, yo' foul mouthed, impudent thief and traitor."

"Release me and try it," shouted McLean; "release me and try it you cowardly bully."

Captain Locke, unable to restrain himself, was advancing, involuntarily, perhaps, but nevertheless threateningly, toward the prisoner, when young Brevar caught him by the arm and begged him for God's sake not to mind what McLean said, but to let the conversation cease.

While the attention of the confederates was thus centered on the parties to this wordy controversy, Lindsay and Northrup, armed with heavy clubs sprang forward, and by rapid and well directed blows, felled Locke, Brevar and one soldier to the earth. Seizing each a carbine, and bringing it to a ready, they commanded the remaining soldier to cut the bonds of the prisoner; in an instant McLean stood armed beside them. The affair was over in a minute, and yet the victory could not have been more complete.

"McLean," said Lindsay, "bind the prisoners."

McLean dropped the carbine which he had hastily picked up, and obeyed the order promptly as to three of them, but when he came to Captain Locke he straightened himself and said:

"A few minutes ago you were about to chastise me for what you were pleased to term my insolence. I asked you to release me and try it. Now, sir, we are on equal footing; both unarmed, and you are free to execute your threat if you have the courage to do so."

But the captain, probably not deficient at all in physical courage, was certainly too much bewildered by the sudden change which had taken place to comprehend the proposition made to him, and as if deaf to what had been said, stupidly held out his hands to be tied.

"Bind him," shouted Lindsay, impatiently, and McLean obeyed the order without further delay.

III

ALICE BREVAR

THE horses were soon resaddled, Lindsay, Northrup and McLean each taking one; young Brevar was mounted on the other, and with the rest of the prisoners on foot they proceeded at once to the river. The ferryman had returned to his cabin, but when the call was made he heard it, and coming reluctantly and sleepily to his boat, yelled:

"Yo' uns comin' across agin ter night?"

"Yes; hurry up the boat," shouted McLean.

As the stupid fellow shoved away from the further shore he muttered: "Dem sesesh must be crazy. Dey ez a gwine ter make me tote 'em for'ard en back all night."

After crossing the river the party moved westward as rapidly as it was possible for the prisoners to travel, and had proceeded six miles or more in silence when, addressing Lindsay and Northrup, McLean said:

"We left Davidson county behind us when we crossed the Yadkin, and are now

in Davie, not far from Mocksville. We must avoid the town, for while I have many friends there, I have also many enemies who would ride whip and spur to Lexington to put a squadron of cavalry on our track."

They now abandoned the public highway for a by-road leading in a southerly direction through the forest; and after following it for some distance, McLean, turning to young Brevar, said:

"Frank, if you will promise to make no effort to escape, we will untie your hands and thus render you more comfortable."

"Thank you," replied Brevar, "I shall make no promise, and will escape if possible. I can neither ask nor accept any favors for myself, which you do not accord to my comrades."

"Very well," returned McLean; "We shall press none on you, and if you undertake to escape it will be at the peril of your life."

"But, Mr. McLean," continued Brevar, "while I ask no exemption from the lot of my comrades, will you permit me to re-

lieve Captain Locke by turning this horse over to him?"

"I have no respect, sir," replied McLean hotly, "for the man whom you call Captain Locke; but if you prefer to walk I shall not object to his riding."

The sun had been up an hour or more when, coming to an enclosed field, McLean dismounted, and laying down a panel of rail fence, led his followers through the gap to a barn which he had purposely approached from the rear to avoid observation. Leaving his companions and the prisoners here, McLean proceeded to the house which was not far distant, and soon afterwards returned with a sedate gentleman of middle age whom he introduced to the officers as Joseph Fielding.

"This is thy party, friend David?" said Fielding; and then observing that four of the men were in part bound, he exclaimed: "Why, friend! why has thee tied the hands of these men?" Now recognizing young Brevar, he continued: "Surely is not this Hugh Brevar's son Francis?"

"Yes, that is Frank, the son of my old neighbor and friend; but Joseph, the sons

of even the best men often have wild oats to sow, and Frank has just now a surplus. We are simply keeping him out of mischief."

"But I tell thee, friend David, I will have no part nor lot in this matter; unbind these men and let them stay or go at their pleasure, or neither thy men nor thy horses shall have entertainmeent at my hands."

"Friend Joseph," replied McLean coolly, as he led his horse into the stable, "it is your duty and one of the requirements of your religion to feed the hungry."

"Yea, and it is also my duty to unloose bonds, and let the captive go free."

"I shall in good time discharge that duty for you; but now what we want is food. Gentlemen, lead your horses into the stable while I provide them with something to eat. Joseph has plenty, and is one of the most hospitable men in Davie county."

"Friend Davy McLean, I protest against thy action; if thee will unbind these men my house and barn are open to thee and thine, but if thee comes here in a warlike spirit, and with blood on thy hands, thee

must go hence. I will have no fellowship with thee."

"Friend Joseph," said McLean, as he proceeded to supply the horses with forage, "you are the most unreasonably obstinate Quaker in North Carolina. Without knowing anything about the matter you conclude that I am in the wrcng, and at once allow your carnal spirit to get the better of your judgment, and condemn without giving me an opportunity for explanation."

"O no, I will not be hasty with thee, but I will not aid thee in thy warlike enterprises. I respect thee as a man of good family, who has in times past done generous deeds, but thy reputation of late has been that of a turbulent, bloody-minded man, and this company leads me to suspect thee has been upon an errand of mischief, and is engaged in the business of war."

"Let us go to the house," replied McLean, "and while your good wife is preparing breakfast for both bond and free, I will endeavor to satisfy you that your suspicions are grossly unjust."

"I go then," returned Joseph, "only upon the condition that thee will exculpate thyself, and satisfy me thee is not engaged in a warlike act."

It is probable the language of this sagacious Quaker was prompted more by a prudent care for his own property and temporal well-being than by his convictions of duty and desire to keep himself in harmony with the tenets of his religious faith. He was living in a section where neighbors were divided in sentiment on questions calculated to arouse the bitterest animosities, and stimulate the most violent acts. It would perhaps have been unsafe, therefore, for him to have received McLean cordially in the presence of young Brevar and his fellow prisoners.

Rachel Fielding, to whom the party was soon introduced, received McLean and his friends kindly, and greeted the prisoners with an expression in which there was an evident commingling of tenderness, sympathy and surprise. In her modest cap, drab apron and brown frock, she seemed a perfect type of the neat housewife and good mother.

The breakfast to which her guests were soon invited was not only well served, but excellently prepared. McLean, Lindsay, and Northrup stood guard in turn over the prisoners, and while treating them with the utmost kindness, afforded no opportunity for their escape.

When McLean and his party were leading their horses from the stable and about to resume their journey, Joseph said:

"David McLean, thee has failed to satisfy me that thee is engaged in a justifiable enterprise. Thee has secured thy entertainment by leading me to suppose thee could give a proper and sufficient reason for holding these citizens in bonds. Thee has not dealt openly with me and I beg thee to make amends for thy subtle and evasive conduct by permitting the son of my old friend Brevar, and his companions to go free."

"Friend Joseph," returned McLean, "if I did not know you were a noncombatant I would not accept these reproaches from you in a kindly spirit. Do you know, sir, what you ask? It is not eight hours since these men dragged me at dead of night

from my bed, and attempted to take me forcibly before a tribunal which only awaited my appearance to go in mockery of justice through the forms of a trial, and sentence me to death. Thanks to these gallant Union officers, I was rescued, and now while I propose to do the prisoners no harm, I do intend to keep them from doing me further mischief."

"What thee says may be true, but if true, friend Davy McLean, it shows simply that two wrongs have been committed; one wrong can never justify another; the true philosophy teaches us to return good for evil. If thine enemy ask thy cloak, give him thy coat also; and if he smite thee on the one cheek, turn to him the other. If thou lovest simply thy friends, what thank have ye, for even the heathen do this much. Love thine enemies, Davy McLean; refrain from violence and bloodshed and thy days shall be long in the land. Thee and thy friends and thine enemies also are welcome to what little thou hast had at my house, and as thee leaves, permit me to hope that the day of strife may be soon past, and that peace may come with healing on her wings,

for it is but too apparent that the land is now in a great strait."

"Thanks for your homily, friend Joseph," replied McLean, "and for your hospitality also. Good bye."

After leaving the house of Joseph Fielding, McLean's party traveled on by-roads and paths through the forest until late in the afternoon, when they entered the public highway.

"We have now left Davie behind us," said McLean, "and are going through the northern part of Iredell, a county organized in 1788 and named in honor of Judge James Iredell, senior. It was originally a part of Rowen. The Whites, Osbornes, Caldwells and Brevars have been prominent families in this section for over a hundred years. Old John Brevar settled within the present limits of Iredell at a place known as Center Church in 1740; he was an old man when the war of the revolution began; five of his sons served in the Continental army. When the British under Cornwallis invaded North Carolina they burned his residence, out houses and barns. In short, they served

him precisely as my confederate friends have treated me."

The latter portion of McLean's remarks fell on inattentive ears, for before he had concluded a young girl on horseback was observed galloping toward them, followed by a male and female servant also mounted. A stream of golden hair fell loosely over her shoulders, and a feathery plume floated like a pennant from her dainty hat. She sat her horse with fearless and graceful ease, and her bearing, generally, indicated that saucy independence and rollicking buoyancy characteristic of youth when endowed with an excess of mental and physical vitality.

Putting whip to her horse she was about to pass McLean at rapid pace, when he shouted, "Alice!"

Reining in beside him the girl exclaimed:

"Why, uncle Davy, this is a surprise. I did not expect to meet you."

"Whom did you expect to meet, you tom-boy?"

"Nobody, sir," she answered saucily, "I am on my way to uncle John Brevar's."

"There is Frank," pointing to young Brevar. "I am taking him home; I thought you would be glad to see him."

"Frank!" she exclaimed, and then recognizing her brother among the prisoners marching on foot, she continued: "Why, Frank, how is this?"

"Ask Mr. McLean, sister," replied Frank, doggedly. "I am a prisoner."

"A prisoner, and to uncle Davy McLean? Surely, uncle Davy, this is a mistake."

"A mistake of Frank's, Alice, not of mine," replied McLean pleasantly. "Frank is a rebel; I am taking him where he will do no mischief."

"I am a rebel, too, uncle Davy," retorted Alice. "I begin to fear you will bind me also."

"Well, really I ought to do it, but I haven't the heart. Possibly I might get one of the young men in my party to do it for me."

"No, they could not," she replied resolutely.

"Well, then I fear you must be permitted to go free."

"But, uncle, you surely do not intend to keep brother Frank bound and a prisoner?"

"I have already offered to remove his bonds if he would pledge his word that he would not attempt to escape, but he refuses to make the promise; what more can I do?"

"You can turn him over to me, uncle."

"And you would turn him loose, you rebel!"

"But what will you do with him, uncle Davy?"

"I shall deliver him to his father, Miss Alice, and if he chooses to let him go, so be it."

"No harm will come to him, then?"

"Not by my hand."

The great mountain ranges of west North Carolina, still many miles away, were plainly visible. The sun was just now dropping behind them and its level beams were adding new loveliness to the foliage of the hills by fringing it with gold; on the lower grounds, however, the shadows were gathering, and in the valleys deepening to twilight.

"I shall return home," said Alice, "and give notice of your coming. Good-bye, uncle Davy."

After pausing an instant to exchange a word with her brother, she gave free rein to her impatient horse, and, as she galloped away, contributed for a moment, new interest and beauty to the landscape, and then disappeared amid the splendors of an autumn sunset.

To one person, at least, of McLean's party, the coming and going of this young girl had suggested a delightful dream of peace and love and marriage; very interesting indeed, but like most dreams of youth, not at all likely to be fulfilled.

IV

THE GAP INN

IN less than an hour after McLean had been seized by the confederates, widow Brevar, conjecturing that the saddest of fates awaited her brother, ordered a faithful negro servant to take the best horse on the plantation and proceed with all possible dispatch to a camp of loyal North Carolinians on the Blue Ridge, and acquaint them with the circumstances of his capture, and the fears which she entertained for his safety.

After getting beyond Davie county the line of the messenger's journey led him through Iredell, and to the western limit of Wilkes; the distance was quite sixty miles, but so well did the honest fellow obey the injunctions of his mistress that at a little after two o'clock in the afternoon of the day on which he started he arrived at a rickety, unpainted wooden inn, situated in a quiet little cove at the foot of the mountain, and near a gap which had so far been improved by filling and excavation

as to render it possible for the stage coach to climb the ridge, and so reach the valley beyond.

On entering the office of the inn, if it be proper to designate the dingy room used for the reception of all comers by so imposing a title, the negro found the atmosphere of the apartment so befogged and befouled by the smoke of execrable tobacco, and the odors of vile spirits, that sickened and bewildered, he failed to realize at once that he was in the presence of six or eight southern gentlemen, dressed in seedy butternut clothing, and crowned with slouchy hats, who were leaning over the rude counter, imbibing leisurely a medicinal decoction of which whisky and tansy were the principal ingredients.

Colonel Lafayette Huskins, the landlord and proprietor of the Gap Inn, now stood behind the bar with his thumbs in the arm holes of his vest exchanging with his customers such observations relative to the war and the weather as he deemed profitable to them. He had evidently been intended for a corpulent man; a liberal supply of bone and cuticle had been furnished him, but

owing doubtless to circumstances which those who originated the architectural design for his being did not foresee, and could not control, he had failed to meet to any considerable extent the expectations of his projectors. Instead of filling out in a ripe, well rounded manner, pleasant to look upon, he began to wither before maturity, and as the result of this untimely shrinkage, the skin now hung about his face and neck, superabundant, flabby and blotched, while that part of his structure which lay below the waist had evidently experienced a very material subsidence, if not an utter collapse. In short there was a grandeur of design and an incompleteness of execution, in Colonel Huskins' bodily temple, so apparent that the spectator involuntarily wondered how an edifice intended to be so large could have come to be so little.

The colonel, however, was a man of considerable consequence in his locality; he was at the meridian of life, and his vocation had brought him in contact with all classes of southern gentlemen; in fact the time was not long past when the prominent lawyers and statesmen of Tennessee and

North Carolina dined and lodged quite frequently at the Gap Inn. From these he had picked up broad but somewhat detached and fragmentary views of national affairs, and almost hourly threw out with his tobacco spittle nuggets of political wisdom, calculated to excite the admiration and secure the respect and confidence of his hearers. Indeed, at one period prior to the war, he had been seriously urged by the electors of Wilkes and Watauga counties, as a candidate for congress, and with a view to qualifying himself fully for this responsible position, he had gone to the expense of getting from the most skillful tailor of Wilkesboro, a blue dress coat with brass buttons, that being, in his opinion, the costume indispensable to a southern statesman, and the only thing needed to fit a man for a seat in the national house of representatives, or United States senate.

The men who stood smoking and drinking at the bar of the Gap Inn, could not in justice be set down as fair types of the average southron, although they were in fact representatives of a class quite numerous in the south. They had been in the

confederate service, but finding the restraints of military discipline grated harshly on the tastes and habits of early life, and conflicted with that spirit of license sometimes called liberty, for which the white people of the south are especially noted, they had abandoned the army and now sought exemption from further service among the mountain fastnesses of west North Carolina and east Tennessee. The two qualities upon which they prided themselves the most highly were first, the fact that they were gentlemen, and second, the fact that a gentleman was so much superior to a negro it would be sacrilege to mention the two in the same connection.

Restless, courageous and unscrupulous, they were ever ready to engage in any enterprise which did not demand for too long a period the sacrifice of their idle and shiftless habits of life. Tolerated and sometimes encouraged even, and used by the loyal men of west North Carolina and east Tennessee, there were but few points of resemblance between them and the mountain people, and these were in non essentials. They dressed very much alike, and their

dialect was the same; but in most other respects they were totally dissimilar.

The Union men, as a rule, were small but independent farmers or farmers' sons, whose homes were on the mountain slopes, or in the little valleys which abound in that region. They had been reared to labor with their own hands, often uneducated indeed, but generally temperate, honest and thrifty. Imbued to some extent with the prejudice of race peculiar to a slave state, they yet had the sense to know and feel that the tendency of slavery was to impoverish and deteriorate the whites as well as the blacks. They, therefore, regarded the effort to dismember the Union for the sole purpose of extending and perpetuating this institution, as a monstrous crime against civilization, for which there could be neither justification nor palliating excuse.

Mrs. Brevar's servant, full of the message he had now carried for twelve hours, and impatient of delay, finally called attention to himself and his errand by saying:

"Massa Davy McLean was took las' night."

"The h—l he was!" shouted one of the party as all eyes centered on the negro. "Who took him?"

"Dunno; secesh hoss company. Young massa Frank Brevar waz de on'y one dis nigger knowed."

"The son of 'Squire Hugh Brevar?" the landlord asked after removing a corn cob pipe from his mouth.

"Yasser; yasser; de 'Squire's son Frank."

"What'd they do with McLean?" continued the landlord.

"Dunno, sah; hyar mistiss' letta; s'pose dat'll tell, sah."

Colonel Huskins took the letter from the negro, opened and examined it carefully, then shook his head in a mysterious way and handed the document to a gentleman near him, remarking as he did so:

"Bad go, Majah Rutherford—bad go fer Davy."

The person thus addressed examined the paper with all the attention a lawyer would be likely to concentrate on a bill of particulars in which he sought to detect some flaw that would be fatal to it; but as if

unable to find any radical defect in the instrument, he finally turned it over to a companion with the remark:

"They'll hang him, suah."

And so widow Brevar's letter passed from hand to hand eliciting remarks not at all encouraging as to the probable fate of McLean, until it finally reached a young man who did not care to plume himself on the extent of his literary attainments, and so confessed frankly that he could not read.

"What! can't read?" exclaimed Col. Huskins in astonishment.

"Can't read!" said Major Rutherford in a manner which indicated pity for the unfortunate mental condition of the young man.

"Can't read," echoed four or five others with various intonations of voice expressive of surprise, regret and ridicule.

"Not a word; what does the old woman say, any how?" returned the young man angrily.

"'Ho there, Sam," shouted Colonel Huskins, summoning an unseen person from an adjoining room.

"Yasser," responded Sam as his wooly head appeared in the doorway.

"Go on ter th' ridge quicker'n lightnin', mind, an' tell Captain Bender to come hyar; the rebs hev got Davy McLean."

As Sam shot out of the front door in obedience to his master's command, the illiterate young man raised his voice again, and inquired rather impatiently:

"What'n 'l does the old woman's letter say?"

"Don't be in a hurry, Dick," replied Colonel Huskins; "let's drink an' think it over."

"How 'n 'l can a man think over what he don't know?" persisted Dick; "read her out."

The landlord at this juncture took a sup of whisky to stimulate his intellect for the task before him, then unfolded the letter slowly, scanned it with great deliberation, and remarked solemnly:

"Kind o' crabbed, blind sort of han' the ole woman writes, isn't it, Majah?"

"Damn crabbed," replied Major Rutherford emphatically; "it beats me; it'll beat anybody."

"Yer right, Majah," answered Colonel Huskins, regarding the document contemptuously. "I'll bet the drinks fer the hull party that even Bender can't read that air writin'. As yo' very justly observed Majah, it's damn crabbed."

"O, ho! yo' can't read," exclaimed the ignorant young man, as he glanced derisively at the landlord. "O, yo' precious fraud, to be playin' yo'se'f off on me fo' a edicated gen'leman."

"Mr. Richard Smelter," said Colonel Huskins, taking a long breath, and thus swelling himself out until he seemed rather imposing, "that langwidge, sah, is not the langwidge wich a gen'leman should address to a gen'leman, sah. Fraud, sah, is a approbrious epithet, sah, an' I shall permit no man in No'th Ca'lina to denominate me a fraud."

"Lafe Huskins," responded Mr. Smelter, hotly, "yo' dunno any mor'n a dam' nigger, an' yer pretendin', all th' time to be a edicated man. Dry up!"

"Mr. Richard Smelter," replied the landlord in a solemn and chilly way, "I kin bar much from a frien', sah, fo' I'm a kind

hearted man, an' generous, an' so was my fambly afo' me, sah; it is one o' th' oldest famblies in No'th Ca'liny, sah. We was among the fust to come. We surrendered titles and estates in the ole world because we loved liberty, sah, an' hated despotism. When th' Huskinses concluded on doin' a thing they never stood on expense, sah. We're gentle as lambs to our frien's, but dangerous as hyenas when our blood's up, sah. My gran'father fit on King's mountain under Gineral Seiver, sah, an' by Gord I won't allow no man in No'th Ca'liny to call me a fraud, an' add to th' insult by sayin' I dunno no mor'n a dam' nigger."

"Gen'lemen, gen'lemen, keep cool," interrupted Major Rutherford; "let's arrange this persinal difficulty amicably, gen'lemen."

"No, sah; no, sah," broke in Colonel Huskins with augmented violence; "there can be no arrangement short of a retraction of the approbious langwidge, an' unless that's to once, th' insult shall be wiped out in blood, sah—I'll sen' him a message, sah. I'll show him the Huskinses is gen'lemen."

"I never said yo' was n't a gen'leman," shouted Mr. Smelter.

"Yo' didn't?" yelled the landlord.

"No, sah; never, sah. I say yo' air a gen'leman, Colonel Huskins."

"Well, that's manly; that's what I call noble. I forgive yo', Smelter; let's shake an' drink, sah, at my expense; understan', sah, at my expense."

Upon this most fortunate termination of a terrible misunderstanding which apparently involved the honor of the landlord of the Gap Inn, and possibly the lives of two of its inmates, a tall, raw-boned man of thirty-five, dressed in the prevailing butternut, and heavily armed, strode into the apartment and demanded rather peremptorily to know what information they had respecting the capture of McLean. Colonel Huskins pointed to the colored messenger, and then produced Mrs. Brevar's letter.

"This was addressed to me," he said angrily; "why, sir, did you not direct the fellow where to take it? You certainly had no right to open it, and much less to retain it."

"Th' nigger gave it to me," stammered Huskins, "an' I thought it was writ to me, sah."

"All right, Huskins. John," said Bender, addressing a person on horseback in front of the door, who appeared to be serving in the capacity of an orderly, "ride to the summit and tell Lieutenant Witham to gather the men and bring them to the Gap Inn at once. We march to Wilkesboro' to-night, and too much time has already been lost."

"Where is McLean, sah?" asked Major Rutherford.

"In Salisbury, I suppose, by this time."

"Yo' air not gwine ter march to Salisbury arter him?"

"No," said Bender, "but I propose to make old Hugh Brevar see that he's brought back safe and sound, or I'll burn his house and barns, and hang him to boot."

"Good," replied Rutherford; "we'll go 'long; it may be yo'll run agin a squad of home guards at Wilkesboro', an' we'll hev some fun."

"All right, Major. How many men can you muster on horseback?"

"Six, and they're as good as any six men in No'th Ca'lina, sah."

"Get ready; we shall start in an hour, and if there is any fun going you shall share it."

At four o'clock in the afternoon there were gathered in front of the Gap Inn a hundred men mounted on horses, mules and asses, some with saddles, others bare-back, and still others with cushions of straw fastened on the animals by girths of twisted tow, or hempen cord. Their clothing was in all the various stages of dilapidation, and of all colors, the one predominating, however, being that tint of dirty brown known as butternut; the men were generally armed with shotguns, but occasionally there could be seen a rifle, and still more rarely a Springfield musket. The officers were well mounted, wore no insignia of rank, and no side arms, but carried in addition to a double-barreled shotgun, a brace of heavy revolvers buckled by a belt to the waist.

At dusk this nondescript army entered Wilkesboro' howling like demons. The citizens of the village, concluding their object was pillage, at once closed shops and stores. Bender, the leader of the troop, did his ut-

most to take his command through without halting, but this he found utterly impossible. Some of the men, as if guided by instinct, stopped in front of a small store, broke in the door, and rolling a barrel of apple-jack to the sidewalk, helped themselves to what they wanted to drink on the spot, and to all they had the means of carrying away. Before they left Wilkesboro', there were many drunken and boisterous men in the troop, and probably none wilder and more reckless in their behavior than the little squad under Rutherford.

It was still eight miles or more to the Brevar plantation. The horses had by this time become weary, and the cavalcade moved slowly, but good feeling prevailed, and an east Tennesseean, prompted probably by the apple-jack, and possibly by the moonlight, which fell softly on the hills, sang in a good round voice:

"A few days more will tell the tale,
And homeward we'll be rushing;
And anxious hearts in sorrow now,
Will then with joy be gushing."

V

HUGH BREVAR

THE residence of Hugh Brevar, a large wooden structure with a lower and upper balcony extending across its entire front, stood modestly back from the public highway. Its approach was a broad avenue overshadowed by stately elms. It was too dark under the trees for one going to the house to see anything save the gray line of the road; but the murmur of voices suggested the existence of some extraordinary commotion in the immediate vicinity of the mansion. The mountain men had formed an irregular line of battle on the lawn before it, and Hugh Brevar stood on the balcony confronting them.

"I knew nothing," he said earnestly, "of the capture of McLean until you told me of it, and could have had nothing whatever to do with it."

"But, Mr. Brevar," replied Bender, "your son was one of the party which seized him, and we shall hold you rseponsible for his

safe return. If a hair of McLean's head is harmed, we shall make you suffer for it."

"Why sir," retorted Brevar, hotly, "my son is not in my keeping; he is a soldier of the confederate army, acting under orders, doubtless. You cannot in justice, therefore, hold me responsible for his acts. Davy McLean and I are friends, and have been all our lives. I would make any possible sacrifice to aid him for friendship's sake, but what can I do?"

"You can notify the commandant at Salisbury that you are in the hands of the loyal men of North Carolina and Tennessee, who propose to hang you, and will do so, if McLean is not immediately released."

"But I cannot do that, sir; if free I could make an effort to save the life of a friend, but if in duress it would be accounted cowardice to prefer such an appeal as you suggest."

"Very well, sir," replied Bender, firmly; "if this is your final determination, I will give the order to burn your house, and shall take you to the mountains and in some way send the message myself, for so sure as men

die, you shall suffer the same fate awarded to Davy McLean."

"But, my dear sir," urged Brevar softly, "is not this grossly unjust?"

"War, Mr. Brevar," replied Bender, "is not a holiday pastime, neither is it a work of charity; those engaged in it are not expected to adjust the scales of justice to a hair, and award to each one his exact due. Those who furnish the sinews of war, however, are as guilty as those who fight. You are, to all intents and purposes, at war against the union; you contribute of your substance to maintain armies in rebellion against it; you, and such as you, are far more responsible for the present condition of affairs than the rank and file of the Confederate army; by your wealth and influence you have arrayed whole communities against the flag, and there is no good reason why you should be exempt from the evils which you have precipitated upon the country."

"But, sir, would you render my family homeless?"

"Without good cause, I would not, but when you entered upon this accursed rebel-

lion you made thousands of families homeless. You put the torch to my house, to McLean's house, to the house of every loyal man in the south." And then in a voice which quivered somewhat, he continued: "You did not stop to inquire about our families; we were poor indeed, but our cabins were to us what your mansions are to you. They sheltered us from the storm, made nests for wives and little ones. You gave the provocation; you made the first advances; you taught us the way; it is well, therefore, that payment should be returned to you in kind. Lieutenant Witham take charge of this man and see that he is conducted safely to the Ridge; men, fire these buildings!"

The great shout with which this command was greeted showed that it accorded fully with the spirit and inclination of the rough men who had, during the progress of this discussion gathered about their leader.

As Captain Bender turned on his heel to indicate that the end of the controversy had been reached, fifty men started to obey the order, when McLean, who had just ar-

rived, sprang to the balcony and placing himself beside Brevar, shouted:

"Countermand your order, Captain Bender."

"Why, McLean," exclaimed Bender, "I thought you were in Salisbury; we have been worrying about you."

"So I would have been but for a lucky accident. Hugh," continued McLean, turning to Brevar and taking his hand, "you are free; no harm shall come to you, my old friend, and no loss save the loss of a good supper which I know will be no loss to you. Provide for Captain Bender's men and we will leave you in peace and safety."

The mountain men, recognizing McLean, began to yell heartily.

"My men," said he in a voice which all could hear, "I am rejoiced at the good will you have manifested for me, and thank you cordially. I was, as you have heard, seized by a little squad of cavalry while in my bed at the house of my sister in Davie county, but, fortunately, on the way to Salisbury I was rescued by two gallant Federal officers who had escaped from prison and were making their way north. These officers and

four prisoners are here. Permit me to introduce to you Captains Lindsay and Northrup, of the National army."

As the two men stepped forward and bowed to the mob, they were greeted with a prolonged yell of delight. When silence was again restored, McLean turned to Captain Bender and said:

"I deliver into your keeping three of these men, and ask that you will have them conducted to a post of the United States army and turned over as prisoners. The other I shall take the liberty to put in the custody of his father." Cutting the cord which bound young Brevar's hands, he continued: "Hugh, I present your son to you, and trust that henceforth you will keep him out of mischief."

The servants of the Brevar household were already busy preparing food for the mountain men. In a place where it was necessary each day to provide for a hundred souls, white and black, the draft now made upon the resources of the establishment was easily and speedily met. The officers of the command, with Lindsay, Northrup, McLean, and as many of the men as could be

accommodated, were soon invited to the dining room, while others were provided for at tables placed on the balcony.

Hugh Brevar was a man of sixty; the years of his life had, however, dealt gently with him. He was tall and well rounded, with a smooth face, a prominent chin, gray eyes and a well-developed head, now partially bald. Educated, genial, hospitable and rich, nothing usually pleased him better than to have his table surrounded by friends. On this occasion, however, he was not by any means in that pleasant frame of mind so necessary to enable him to make his guests welcome, and render them easy and comfortable. He could not rid himself of the thought that a great misfortune had but a moment ago threatened, and that he was now indebted for safety to the accidental interference of a friend, rather than to any protection which his government had been able to afford.

Mrs. Brevar appeared at the table, greeted McLean cordially, and bowed with pleasant and graceful dignity to the officers as they were presented by her husband. She was probably ten years his junior and in her

youth had evidently been a woman of rare beauty. She still bore, in every lineament of her countenance and movement of her body, the evidence of thorough cultivation and refinement.

"Well, Frank," said the father brusquely, "it is not at all creditable to you to be captured by two unarmed men. How did it happen, sir? Our people are in the habit of insisting that one southerner can whip three Yankees, but in this instance the rule seems to have been reversed."

"The fact is," replied Frank, blushing, "we had recrossed the Yadkin, and had no thought of the presence of enemies; we had halted to rest and lunch, and for the purpose of relieving the animals as well as ourselves, had taken the saddles from the horses, and laid aside our arms. To add to our bad luck Captain Locke and Uncle Davy got into an angry altercation which attracted the attention of all, when, at the opportune moment, these gentlemen rushed in, knocked us down, seized our carbines, and made us prisoners. It was simply a piece of good luck on their part, and bad luck on ours. The whole affair was

over before we really knew what had occurred. I did not see the gentlemen until after I was knocked down."

"That was soon enough," said McLean, dryly.

"But who could have provided against such a singular combination of circumstances," continued young Brevar, as if until the matter was cleared up there would be a shadow upon his honor as a soldier. "No one could have conjectured that there were two Federal officers or soldiers in Davidson county, and that they were near the place where our halt was made. After recrossing the Yadkin we felt as absolutely safe as if in the streets of Salisbury or Lexington; even on this side we should have apprehended no danger except from strolling bands of bushwhackers."

"Mr. Brevar's statement is correct; it was simply a matter of accident," said Lindsay; "we stumbled on Captain Locke's party while feeling our way to the ferry. We saw that three blows would do the work, and so the blows were struck."

"Captain Northrup," said the elder Brevar, "have not your people at the North

about concluded you cannot conquer the South, and that it would be better to cease fighting?"

"There will be no cessation," responded Northrup, "until the South lays down its arms, and the southern people submit to the laws. In fact, we are more hopeful and determined now than ever."

"It is impossible for you to succeed, sir."

"On the contrary, Mr. Brevar, everything now points to a speedy and successful termination of the conflict. The resources of the north have hardly felt the drain which the war has made upon them, while those of the South are nearly exhausted. You have made a brave, nay, a desperate fight, but you cannot continue it much longer."

"It will never end, sir, until the independence of the Confederate states is recognized. If I understand the temper of the southern people, they would prefer to die rather than yield one iota of their rights."

"What rights, my friend?"

"The right to secede, for one."

"No such right ever existed," replied Northrup, calmly. "I am not a lawyer and therefore will not undertake to discuss the

legal points involved; but craving your pardon, it seems to me utterly absurd that thirteen or thirty-four states should have entered into a compact which any one of them might disregard at pleasure. The people of the United States did a foolish thing, indeed, if, in order to form a more perfect union, they ordained and established a constitution which the people of one state, or a dozen states, might at any time set at naught. This would have been simply child's play, Mr. Brevar, and our fathers were earnest men, incapable of such folly."

"But, sir," replied Mr. Brevar with feeling, "you struck the first blow at the constitution when, by the selection of a sectional president, you threatened the institutions of the south."

"On the contrary, we elected Mr. Lincoln in the precise manner prescribed by the constitution, and he gave you the most solemn assurances that he had no purpose directly, or indirectly, to interfere with the institution of slavery, affirming he had neither the lawful right, nor the inclination to do so. For nearly three years our armies have now suffered hindrance, defeat, and

humiliation, because we have sought to restore the Union without disturbing slavery; but we have struck it at last, thank God, and we shall now crush to atoms what Mr. Alexander H. Stephens calls the 'corner-stone' of the Confederacy."

"Admitting for the sake of argument, that you have the power, where do you obtain the right to do so?"

"From yourselves; you gave it to us. When you rebelled against lawful authority and thrust the war upon us you conceded to us every right which belongs to belligerent powers. You made it lawful for us to slay, destroy, annihilate whatever hindered the restoration or preservation of the Union, and the establishment of a substantial and permanent peace. We had, indeed, a moral right higher than this, but like selfish men, bound by that sort of honor which is said to exist among thieves, we turned a deaf ear to the appeals of humanity, disregarded duty, and proposed in good faith to abide by the contract, and while pretending to be a free people, permit millions of mankind to be enslaved. As we did not avail ourselves of the higher right,

and did not seek to do so, we can claim now simply that we are doing a good work because dire necessity compels us to it, and for which we are entitled to no credit either from God or man."

"You will get blow for blow, Captain Northrup; the south cannot be conquered."

"The south will be compelled to submit to the authority of the legal government."

"Hugh Brevar," interrupted McLean, "you objected to the secession of North Carolina."

"Certainly, because I hoped to redress our grievances in a peaceful way. I never doubted that North Carolina had the right to secede."

"Then you regarded the Union as a loose Confederacy which might be broken at the option of any one of the states?"

"Certainly."

"That is saying substantially that thirty-four men have made a contract which any one of the thirty-four may disregard. It will not do, Hugh; as Captain Northrup has suggested, this would be mere child's play. Why, if this right of secession ex-

isted, was it not recognized in the constitution so explicitly as to leave no room for doubt or misunderstanding?"

Mr. Brevar was prepared of course to reply to all this from the southern standpoint, and would have done so, but Captain Bender here interrupted the discussion by saying:

"I have a long march before me, and shall therefore have to ask you to excuse me."

As the leader of the mountain men retired, the officers and soldiers of his command followed him in a tumultuous way. The supper being now ended, Mr. Brevar invited the remaining guests into a handsome parlor, where the heavy antique furniture of a past generation still rendered service.

"By the way, Hugh," said McLean, in a tone which indicated surprise, "where is Alice? How does it happen she did not notify you of our coming?"

"Alice!" exclaimed Mr. Brevar, anxiously; "did you meet Alice?"

"Certainly."

"Is she not in the house?" said young Brevar, addressing his father.

"I suppose not. She rode over to brother John's after dinner. I think she must be there."

"I am quite sure she is not," replied the son. "She met us five or six miles on the way thither, but turned back."

"Yes," said McLean, emphatically, "she returned for the very purpose of informing you of our coming."

"This is strange; I will make inquiries about it," said Mr. Brevar, as he hastily left the apartment, followed by his son.

When he re-entered the room a few minutes later, he informed them that Alice had not come back, but was still supposed to be at her uncle's.

"I am sure she is not," said McLean.

"She could not have missed the road," suggested Northrup.

"No," replied Mr. Brevar, "she knows every road and path in Wilkes and Iredell."

"Possibly she may have been deterred from returning by the presence of Bender's men," suggested McLean.

"No, I think she would have found some way of making her presence on the plantation known," replied the father, "but I shall send to the negro quarters and ascertain."

While Mr. Brevar was absent dispatching messengers to make the inquiries suggested, Captain Bender entered the room and spoke privately with McLean.

"Rutherford," he said, "accompanied us to this place with six men, and now I learn neither he nor his men have been seen since the first half hour after our arrival. I fear he may not mean well toward us.

"Why did you bring him?"

"Because it was safer to do so than to leave him behind us."

"What harm do you apprehend from him?"

"I know not; I am simply surprised at his sudden departure, and can only account for it upon the supposition that he means us harm."

"But the only harm he can do you would be to put a regiment of Confederate troops on your track."

"He would not dare do that," replied Bender, "his own neck would be in jeopardy; he would be arrested for desertion."

"Well, be on your guard. Possibly, on second thought, he concluded to keep out of this affair."

"No; that is not the cause of his absence."

"But what can it be, my friend?"

"I cannot answer that; I only know his going in this way has a suspicious look."

The messengers had by this time returned with the information that neither Miss Brevar nor her escort had been seen on the plantation since night fall.

"Bender," said McLean, eagerly, "can it be possible this hell-hound, Rutherford, met the young lady as she was returning and abducted her?"

"I think not, sir, and yet it is possible. He has done many bad things; he would not hesitate to do it, if the thought once entered his head and jibed with his inclination; at any rate, he has been gone three hours, and his going is a mystery to me."

The sharp report of a gun off toward the main road followed by irregular firing, and

then by a volley, interrupted the conversation, and hastened the departure of the guests with a precipitancy which admitted of no formal leave taking. Bender was in the saddle in an instant, and putting spurs to his horse, disappeared under the shadow of the elms. McLean, Lindsay and Northrup followed quickly. In the meantime, the rattle of guns continued, and when McLean turned from the lawn to enter the avenue which led to the public highway, he could discern, by the blaze of carbines, a compact body of cavalry, confronting the somewhat scattered and apparently demoralized Unionists. The latter, however, soon recovering from the surprise occasioned by the first dash of the enemy, dismounted and sought the protection of the trees, and the concealment afforded by the shadowy margin of the avenue. From these points of vantage they poured into their adversaries an irregular, but by no means ineffective fire. The Confederates surprised, doubtless, at finding so much opposition where they probably expected none at all, were feeling their way prudently toward the Brevar mansion, pouring out, as they advanced,

a steady fire, and fully disclosing their number and position by the blaze of their guns.

Captain Bender soon took in the situation. Directing his lieutenant to ride along one side of the avenue, while he hurried down the other, the bushwhackers were ordered to move forward under the shadow of the trees as quickly as possible until they came within short range of the enemy, then deliver a well directed volley, and push him until he either surrendered or fled.

As if for the purpose of covering this movement and diverting the attention of the rebels from the danger which threatened them, McLean rallied the men who had fallen to the rear and formed them in a line of battle across the head of the avenue, and in front of the held horses. This although an independent movement, and made without consultation with Bender, contributed greatly to the latter's success; for the rebels, discovering a regular line of battle forming at some distance in their front, concluded that an effort was being made to rally the bushwhackers, and for the purpose of charging the incomplete line,

pushed boldly forward, but had proceeded only a little way, when they found themselves between two lines of blazing guns. Halting, they steadied the column for a moment, then wheeled and abandoned the field.

From the wounded it was ascertained that this company of cavalry, numbering less than fifty, had been sent out to ascertain if possible what had become of Captain Locke and his men. From the confused story of the ferryman at the Yadkin, the rebels concluded Locke had been captured, and since sunset had learned that McLean, with the prisoners, was but a few hours in advance of them. When, therefore, the mountaineers were first encountered in the Brevar avenue, they took it for granted that they had simply collided with the McLean party, and that their expedition could not be otherwise than successful.

Even after they had been checked by the first fire, the shadow of the trees had so concealed the bushwhackers that the Confederates thought McLean's party had simply been increased by the addition of a few friends whom he had picked up since night-

fall, and if pushed vigorously they would either surrender or seek safety in flight.

The Confederates, who had fallen in this engagement, were left to the care of the Brevars, while the carriage of the family was appropriated by Captain Bender to the transportation of the few men of his command who had been wounded, to their camps on the Blue Ridge.

VI

BLOOD ON THE MOON

IT was nearly midnight when McLean, Lindsay and Northrup left the Brevar mansion to accompany the mountaineers in their journey westward. Up to that time, no tidings had been received of Alice Brevar. The father, however, consoled himself with the hope that, after leaving McLean, she had re-considered her resolution to return home, and by another road proceeded to the place for which she had originally started. This theory, however, was regarded with distrust by both her brother and McLean. They did not doubt the young lady had left them with the intention of returning, and they could conceive of no explanation of her absence now, save that of forcible detention.

The mountaineers, as they entered Wilkesboro' on their return, were extremely boisterous in their demonstrations of joy over the victory just achieved, and as they went galloping through the streets, startled and alarmed the sleepy citizens by

singing in chorus, a song familiar to all east Tennessee soldiers of the Union army:

I.

"My name is Peter Butternut,
I live in Tennessee,
A man of wealth and consequence—
At least I used to be.
I had a thousand acres broad,
An' darkies by the score;
An' plenty filled my house and barn;
What could I ask for more?
Happy was the day, then, happy was the day,
For happy Peter Butternut of loyal Tennessee."

II.

"I had two sons that went to fight,
An' thought that that would do;
But now I've got to send two more
To help the rebels through.
I'm gwine to try the picket line,
An' run it if I can;
An' settle down with uncle Abe,
An' be once more a man.
Happy will be the day, then, happy will be the day,
For happy Peter Butternut of loyal Tennessee."

The Gap Inn on the following morning was thronged with guests. The long march of the night before had so depleted the

natural vigor of the mountain men that they required an extraordinary amount of rest and stimulus. The incidents of the battle as it was called, supplied them with an inexhaustible fund for conversation. An accurate collation of the individual statements of those who participated in the affair, disclosed the astounding fact that there had been some thousands of the enemy engaged, and that hundreds of them had fallen dead, or disabled, on the field. It was the deliberate judgment of Colonel Lafayette Huskins, the landlord, that there had never been so important a battle in west North Carolina since his grandfather fought under General Sevier at King's mountain.

Colonel Huskins had imbibed his tenth installment of applejack since daylight, and his countenance was, if possible, more flabby and inflamed than usual. It must not be supposed, however, that he was in the least degree under the influence of liquor; on the contrary, he was one of those who never drink to excess; enough for him was always sufficient, and he entertained the most profound contempt for

weaklings who lose their equilibrium by the excessive indulgence of their appetites.

After the manner of the keepers of country inns, he esteemed it a part of his duty to entertain his guests, as if they were there by invitation and temporarily the subjects of his care and bounty. The things paid for were dispensed with an ostentatious exhibition of hospitable benevolence more tolerable in the keeper of a charity hospital than the head of an establishment for the entertainment of man and beast. The idea that a public house was in any sense the home of the traveler, where he should have perfect freedom to select his own mode of putting in the time, restricted only by the condition that no violence should be done to public order or private decency, had never once entered his head.

The day was far from being an agreeable one; black clouds were resting heavily on the ridge, and a cold, drizzling rain was falling. The bar-room was full of mountain men, and, as there was no other apartment except the kitchen, where fires could be lighted and the desired warmth obtained, Lindsay and Northrup were endeavoring to

find rest after their fatiguing journey in this crowded room.

Colonel Huskins, standing behind the bar, had just replenished the mugs of a party, that, apparently, stood in as much need of moisture as the arid sands of a desert. He had been kept pretty busily employed since early morning at this work, but being in an oratorical mood, had for some hours improved his interims of leisure by addressing his remarks to Lindsay who sat within earshot, and who could not conveniently get farther away, although for some time he had manifested symptoms of impatience, if not irritation, at the persistent, but doubtless well-meant attentions of the landlord.

"Yo' air from Ohio, sah?"

"Yes," responded Lindsay, with an air of indifference.

"Great state, sah," continued Colonel Huskins, thrusting his thumbs in the arm holes of his waistcoat; "but undeveloped; young, quite young, sah. No'th Ca'liny was settled in 1587; it was the first to be colonized, sah. The first white child born on the continent was born in No'th Ca'liny, sah."

"Where was the first negro born?"

Colonel Huskins looked steadily at Lindsay for a moment, as if to determine whether the question was asked with a serious desire to obtain information, or a view to ridicule and insult him. But as the captain's face seemed utterly unconscious of having violated any of the proprieties of genteel life, the landlord replied stiffly:

"Dunno, sah; never took the trouble to investigate that air subjec', sah; but the daughter of Eleanor Dare, the first white child, was born in Albemarle, sah."

"Was she a healthy child?"

As if possibly he did not understand the question, Colonel Huskins now staggered from behind the counter, and confronting Lindsay, said:

"What did yo' remark, sah?"

"Was the child healthy?"

The tone in which the interrogatory was put was quite serious, but the question itself suggested that possibly Captain Lindsay was disposed to treat Colonel Huskins with less courtesy than is considered requisite among gentlemen of honor, still the landlord could detect no mark of levity in

the captain's countenance, and so he disposed of the matter by saying:

"Really, sah, I can't say; but what I was a goin' to remark, sah, is that No'th Ca'liny is older than Massachusetts."

"Stand up for your own state, Northrup," said Lindsay, with a yawn, but Northrup had dropped off into a doze, and did not hear.

"Yes, sah," continued the colonel, warming up, "the bes' blood of England, Ireland an' Scotland came to No'th Ca'liny, sah."

"Blood," exclaimed Lindsay, regarding his persecutor in a puzzled way, "did it come in casks, or did they bottle it?"

The landlord being now thoroughly annoyed by the captain's stupidity, replied hotly, "No, sah, it came in the veins of the nobility—of th' very fust families, sah." This opening the way to the colonel's favorite theme, he proceeded: "The Huskinses, sah, was a great fambly of England in th' fourteenth century, sah, but they was among th' fust to seek liberty amid th' solitudes of th' new world, an' my gran'father fit fur independence under Gineral Sevier, sah."

"Indeed!"

"True as my name is Lafayette Huskins, sah," continued the landlord triumphantly. "He fit under Gineral Sevier at King's mountain."

"Did he get hurt? Army men, sometimes, I understand, tumble off baggage wagons, or stumble in their haste to get away from the enemy, and so get bruised. I trust your grandfather escaped uninjured?"

But for Colonel Huskins' well known reputation for sobriety, and the fact that it is a solemn and dangerous thing to dispute the statement of a gentleman in regard to his personal condition and habits, one might reasonably conclude that on this occasion he was considerably under the influence of apple-jack. We may, without offense, however, and without impeaching his own testimony as to the universal propriety of his conduct, remark that the colonel, although perfectly sober, acted, under the impulse of the noble and generous blood now circulating like liquid fire through his veins, very much as one in the last stages of inebriety. There could be no further doubt, he thought, that Captain Lindsay was disposed to treat

him discourteously in his own house, and in the presence of his guests. Nay, he had intimated that the colonel's revered ancestor had not faced the enemy in the forefront of battle. This was not only a reflection upon the sacred memory of his grandfather, but it was an insinuation that possibly the blood of the Huskinses was tainted with cowardice. Confronting the captain, therefore, with the air of one who would not be trifled with, he said with great dignity:

"Do yo' mean to insult me, sah?"

"Not at all," replied the captain.

"What do yo' mean?" thundered Huskins.

"My friend," said Lindsay quietly, "if my conversation does not please you, go away. Enlighten somebody else. I am not in a mood to talk or be talked to. You have already honored me too much. I want rest and quiet."

"Sah, I am not used to bein' addressed in this manner," said Colonel Huskins, staggering toward Lindsay, as if he had in his mind thought of doing him personal violence, "an' I'll not submit to it, sah."

"Then I beg you to attend to your own business and leave me alone. I am tired, and you are an infernal bore."

"I'll not stand that from any man, sah. It's not th' langwidge of a gen'leman," shouted the landlord, as he shook his fist threateningly in the captain's face.

Lindsay, now thoroughly incensed, rose from his seat and with great deliberation grasped the irate colonel, and lifting him from his feet, sent him crashing through the window. This done he resumed his chair as coolly as if pitching landlords out of windows was one of the ordinary and innocent pastimes of everyday life.

The mountain men did not apparently regard with favor this unceremonious and precipitous ejection of Colonel Huskins from his own domicile, and certainly when the landlord crawled out of the mud hole in which, very fortunately for his own neck, he had fallen, and re-appeared at the inn door covered with dirt and dripping with water, he was an object for the commiseration and sympathy of all humane and benevolently disposed persons.

"Blood," muttered the landlord from a countenance blazing with wrathful indignation, and at the same time greatly in need of soap and water, "blood can alone atone for this. The Huskinses never submitted tamely to a' insult, but th' Huskinses air gen'lemen, an' they alus settle their persinal difficulties in a gen'lemanly way, an' yo' will find that th' decendant of a man who fit under Gineral Sevier in the' revolutionary war will not be slow to vindicate his own honor. Excuse my temporary absence, gen'lemen."

Having threaded his way through the crowd, Colonel Huskins reached the doorway of an inner room, and turning, bowed with great politeness and disappeared.

This affair was evidently regarded as the precursor of a more serious one, and appeared to have a depressing effect upon the inmates of the Gap Inn. The boisterous conversation and laughter which had hitherto characterized their intercourse, were now succeeded by silence on the part of some, and whispered communications on the part of others. The duel was generally thought to be the only means whereby those who

professed to be gentlemen could obliterate stains put upon what they called their honor. It is true that these combats sometimes resulted in a harmless exchange of shots; at others, in the wounding or death of one or both of the parties to the controversy; but whatever the termination of the duel might be, and although neither preceded nor followed by any retraction of the offense, the result was accepted as a complete vindication of both the wronged and the wrong-doer—of the insulted and the insulter, and so, by a simple attempt at murder, or by the successful perpetration of the crime, the thief, gambler, pimp, or what not, was purified as if by the sacrificial blood of the atonement, and made a gentleman *par excellence,* fitted for association with honorable men and women. In other words, according to the logic of the duello, the slandered man who goes through the ordeal prescribed, although grossly wronged, has obtained perfect satisfaction, while the slanderer who thus meets him in combat, although he has never repented of, nor retracted anything, has discharged his whole duty, and is an honorable gentleman.

It has been said in favor of the duel, and in justification of the public sentiment which upholds it, that it has a tendency to make men guarded and courteous in their intercourse with each other; but it may be affirmed on the other hand that a courtesy prompted by fear of being subjected to personal punishment, is so tainted by cunning cowardice and hypocrisy as to be disreputable and wholly worthless to society. True courtesy springs from a sincere desire to deal equitably and generously with all, and is the natural impulse of the gentleman. Certainly, no society composed of well-bred, educated men and women, who have respect for justice and decency, can for a moment uphold or defend a method for the adjustment of personal disputes, which fails to settle any thing; makes no investigation as to facts, but inflicts its punishments indiscriminately upon the innocent and guilty, and finally, after a needless hazard of life, awards to the just and unjust an equal meed of praise.

In hot blood men are perhaps excusable for resorting to blows, and in rare cases, for making use of deadly weapons; they do

so then without previous thought, or premeditated malice; it is the sudden outburst of a quick temper smarting under what is conceived to be an insult, or an unkind and possibly unjust or infamous act. But in the duel the passions have had abundant time to cool. The preparations for the conflict are made slowly and deliberately; the intention is murder, and in most instances the parties to the conflict are really so unevenly and unfairly matched that the result of the combat can be easily predicted. The practiced shot is set against one who has possibly never fired a weapon in his life, and yet if the latter hesitates to play at a game of which he knows nothing, with one who knows all, that public sentiment which upholds the duel, brands him as a coward, and banishes him from society. The result is that, whether in the right or wrong, he must stand up to meet almost certain death in order to avoid social obliteration.

In the middle ages, when, through ignorance and superstition men were led to believe an overruling providence presided in these contests, and protected the innocent, there was perhaps some justification for

those engaged in them; but now the duel is a crime against the civilization of the century which nothing but a perverted idea of honor, a corrupt public opinion, and a radically rotten condition of public morals, will tolerate or attempt to justify.

Colonel Lafayette Huskins soon reappeared in the office room of the inn. He had laid aside his muddied and wilted apparel, and now presented himself for the admiration of his guests, in that suit of gorgeous blue, with which, at an earlier period of his life, he had hoped to adorn the legislative halls of the nation. The semi-military coat made his body appear quite formidable, while, the soap and water with which he had cleansed his face, imparted to it a cool, glossy and dignified aspect.

Calling to the bar a gentleman who had not hitherto rendered himself conscpicuous in the assembly, otherwise than by a willingness to drink whenever invited to do so, the two conversed apart for some minutes in an undertone, when a piece of paper was procured and the friend proceeded to indite the following letter:

Captain Lindsay, at the Gap Inn:

SIR: — This communication will be presented to you by Major Nowell, who, as my friend and representative, will meet any person whom you may select, with a view to making the preliminary arrangements for the settlement of the unfortunate difficulty which has arisen between us.

I have the honor to be, sir,

Your most obedient servant,

LAFAYETTE HUSKINS.

Colonel Huskins' message was immediately delivered by Major Nowell, a gentleman who had enjoyed some educational advantages in early life, but on whom Dame Fortune, of late, had evidently been venting her displeasure.

"What does it mean?" asked Lindsay, affecting ignorance.

"It means that Colonel Huskins demands satisfaction for the indignity offered him, sah," replied the major.

"Does he want to fight?" inquired Lindsay, coolly.

"He does," responded the major, haughtily.

"Why does he not say so, then? Why go to the trouble of having a letter written, and employing the services of a friend?

He has been ready enough to talk thus far, why should he write?"

"It is the recognized way — the mode prescribed by the code, and sanctioned by the custom of the country, sah. Will you refer me to a friend with whom I can confer?"

"No, sir; I will not."

"Do yo' decline to render satisfaction to Colonel Huskins, sah?"

"What will satisfy him?"

"Either an apology or a meeting."

"By a meeting you mean a duel?"

"That would be a natural inference, sah."

"Very well; tell your friend to select his own weapons and his own distance and let us get through with the affair at once. Inform me when you are ready."

"But the usual mode — the only one recognized by gentlemen, requires a friend to act on yo'r behalf, to see that the affair is fairly conducted."

"I have no friend," responded Lindsay, "whom I would care to involve in a proceeding in which none but fools engage. I am willing to oblige the landlord myself, but cannot consent to ask a friend to participate in an affair that I have good rea-

son to believe is repugnant to both his judgment and conscience."

"This is informal, Captain Lindsay, and not at all in accordance with the usage recognized as proper in such cases; but I will confer with my principal on the subject."

"All right, sir; tell the pestiferous old bore that whenever he is ready I am. You may say, also, that I prefer revolvers as the weapons, and while you are consulting him I will see that mine are in readiness." Thereupon the captain took a six shooter from his belt, and opening it at the breech investigated the cartridges with great deliberation.

"Captain Lindsay," said Northrup who had overheard the conversation, "are you not getting yourself into a good deal of unnecessary trouble?"

"Not at all," replied Lindsay in an undertone. "It's all bluff, Captain Northrup; that man Nowell might fight if he were hard pushed, but the old blatherskite who sent the challenge will not. Look at him now as he stands in the corner while his second talks to him. The blood has aban-

doned his face, and gone done into his boots."

The conference in the corner having by this time ended, Major Nowell returning to Lindsay, said:

"Colonel Huskins cannot consent to an irregular meeting; he desires the affair conducted in the method recognized by gentlemen. If anything were to happen yo' in the absence of a friend, it might afford ground at least for suspicion that unfair means had been used, or some advanttage taken of yo', and so a stigma be fastened upon the Colonel's character as a gentleman of honor, sah, which it would be impossible for him to efface."

"Indeed!" replied Lindsay, with a smile, "I am glad to find Colonel Huskins is a gentleman of —"

"Gim me yo'r han'," interrupted Huskins who had come forward in time to catch Lindsay's reply; "that's manly, sah. Th' Huskinses hev bin gen'lmen fur centuries, sah, an' when that fact is admitted they allers have the ginerosity ter fergive an' fergit."

Then turning to the guests who were watching the proceedings with great interest, he said, with a wave of the hand and the air of a conqueror:

"Now that this affa' hev bin settled honorable an' to the satisfaction of all parties, let's take a drink all round at my expense, gen'lemen — at my expense."

Lindsay was not altogether pleased with the impression which Colonel Huskins' language and manner conveyed, but as everything seemed to be amicably arranged, he had the good sense to accept the situation and drink a social glass with the landlord.

VII

IN LOVE

McLEAN, who had gone to the summit immediately after breakfast, now entered the room accompanied by Captain Bender. They had been endeavoring to solve the mystery of Major Rutherford's sudden departure from the Brevar mansion, but, as yet, had been unable to find any clue to it, or to the whereabouts of Rutherford or the men of his command. The conduct of the Confederate renegade filled McLean with uneasiness and alarm. He could not disconnect him and his sudden abandonment of the Unionists from the disappearance of Alice Brevar. He knew him well, and knew no scruple of conscience, or question of honor, would deter him from the perpetration of any act which his ambition, private interest or passion might suggest. A deserter from the rebel army, he could not look for either social recognition or personal safety among the people of the South who were in sentiment favorable to the Confederacy. With those

who still adhered to the Union, he might indeed hope for protection, but not for their confidence and esteem. He had little, therefore, to lose by any enterprise in which he might engage, however dishonorable it might be. The fear, amounting now almost to absolute conviction, which oppressed the mind of McLean was that this man had seized Alice Brevar, and, hastening to the Blue Ridge, or to the great range of mountains not many miles beyond, secreted her with a view to obtaining money in ransom, or for purposes of an infinitely more repulsive character. As yet, however, no information had reached him fom Hugh Brevar, and he still entertained a faint hope that the girl had after all, adhered to her original intention of going to her uncle's.

The rain which had set in during the early morning, had now ceased. The sky was partially filled with floating clouds, whose shadows were chasing each other over hills and ridges. The little mountain stream that came dashing down through the gap was larger, noisier, and more turbid than usual. The foliage of maple and oak, tinted by the frost with all the various

shades of yellow, red and brown, mingling with the dark green of the cedar, presented to the eye a picture that, when followed to its remoter boundaries, grew soft and dream-like, and finally became a part of the feathery clouds and the blue sky, suggesting to the imagination that it was but a short and delightful journey from the Gap Inn to the great worlds beyond and above — but half a summer day's journey, indeed, on which, however, hand in hand with one's sweetheart, one might linger happily for a century.

As Captain Northrup stood in front of the Gap Inn looking upon this scene, thinking possibly of the apparent proximity of earth and heaven, and of the peace and quiet of the far away coves where the sunlight and the shadows were playing hide and seek together, the image of the fair Alice Brevar somehow crept into the warp and woof of his meditations, and he thought that with her a home in one of these quiet valleys, hemmed in by mountain walls, and so shut out from the perplexities of the world, would be an earthly paradise, and the realization of his happiest dreams. And

yet what did he know of her? But little, indeed; and what did she know of him? Still less — infinitely less, in fact, for she knew not even his name.

But still there is no power on earth to keep young men from dreaming of fair women, and if there were, who would have the obdurateness of heart to exert it? No, since Adam's time, a ringlet, a gentle grace of brow or cheek, the delicate hand, or the flash of a bright eye, has, in all climes, launched simple-minded man upon a boundless sea of delightful reverie, where the waves were moonlight and music, the drift orange blossoms, the bending sky studded with rings and diamonds, and the winds laden with the perfumes of Arabia. And here the gentle sailor floated on and on, hoping to reach that island of the blest where the years of his life should mingle happily with those of the one he loved.

Really, Captain Northrup, brave man, was in an unfortunate mood for a soldier. A few days ago he had been impatient to go north, to rejoin his regiment, to add somewhat to the little glory he had already won; but now he had, in some way, lost

the great desire to leave North Carolina. He had been, in fact, recaptured, and by one, too, who did not even seek to hold him.

"Captain Northrup."

"Why! Mr. McLean, is it you?"

"You have not been asleep, have you, Captain?"

"Oh, no."

"You appeared to be very much absorbed, for I spoke to you twice before you heard me."

"Did you, indeed?"

"I promised to accompany Lindsay and yourself across the Blue Ridge through Watauga county and over the Alleghenies into Tennessee, but I have come to tell you I cannot do so."

"I regret to hear it, Mr. McLean."

"Not more than I. You recollect the young lady who met us yesterday afternoon, and the conversation at Brevar's house respecting her?"

"Very well."

"I have, within the last half hour, received a message from her father stating that she did not go to her uncle's, and that

she is still absent; he fears she has been forcibly carried away, and her mother is distracted with anxiety for the daughter's safety. He begs me to do all in my power, sparing neither time nor money, to rescue her from what he fears may be a worse fate than death."

"This is terrible!"

"Yes; and I must bid you good bye, my friend, for I set out upon the search at once."

"You still think the man whom you call Rutherford abducted her?" asked Northrup, as he walked with McLean up the mountain road.

"I do not doubt it."

"Can I aid in her recovery?"

"No; you know nothing of the resorts of these mountain people, and will yourself need assistance to enable you to get safely through the hills and ridges which lie between this and the camps of the national army. I have already provided you with a guide. In this search for Rutherford you could render us no service."

"Do you think her recovery probable?"

"Yes. Men must have food and cannot

rely entirely for subsistence upon the wild game which may happen to fall in their way, so that the Rutherford party is probably not far from the settlements; they must have water, and so must needs be near a spring or stream; they must have shelter, also, for the nights are cold and the storms frequent; so, in all probability, they have sought temporary lodgement in a deserted farm house or hunter's cabin. The search will be prompt and thorough. Information of the affair at Brevar's reached Salisbury and Lexington this morning; by midnight, and probably before, a regiment of cavalry will be at the Gap Inn. As soon as the moon is fairly up, therefore, the men encamped on the ridge will scatter for the search, to re-assemble finally at some other rendezvous, probably on the mountain range separating North Carolina from Tennessee. I have seen Lindsay, and in the presence of the negro who is to serve you as guide, given him such information respecting the country through which you are to travel as I deemed of value. Your guide is a faithful, intelligent fellow, familiar with the hills, ridges and mountains,

and the people who inhabit them, and will, I doubt not, conduct you safely to the Union lines. Now, my friend, good-bye. There is a better time coming, when I trust we shall meet again."

As they shook hands at parting, the young man said with a slight tremor in his voice:

"I should prefer to remain with you and aid in this search for Miss Brevar, for, to tell you the truth, I have become wonderfully interested in her; but you are doubtless right in supposing I could render you no assistance; so good-bye. I join you heartily in the hope that we shall meet again in the good time coming, and God grant the time may come soon."

Lindsay, Northrup and the guide climbed the ridge during the evening twilight, and were now standing on the crest. The ravine by which they were to descend into the valley lay shrouded in gloom before them. The full, round moon was at their backs, and its mellow beams flooded hill and dale, revealing here and there in the great wilderness which lay far below them, a cultivated farm, with its rude domicile; a

winding stream, now sparkling like liquid silver, then darkening in the shadows, then lost amid the labyrinth of hills and ridges; and far beyond and above them all, an irregular and massive wall, whose turretted summit seemed to uphold the sky, and come in contact with the stars.

"It's a good night for our journey," remarked Lindsay to the guide.

"Yas, sah; kotch a coon or 'possum mebbe 'fore mornin', sah," replied Cæsar.

"Captain Northrup," said Lindsay.

But Northrup was deaf to the voice of his companion, and but half awake to the marvelous beauty of the scene before him. Good man! he was many miles at sea; the shell which bore him onward rocked gently in the moonlight; the waves, as they rose and fell, murmured a bewitching lullaby; the air was laden with the aroma of opening buds; blossoms were drifting round him, and somewhere, just before him, may be, was that island of the blest, and the fair Alice standing on the shore beckoning him to come.

"Northrup!" shouted Lindsay.

No answer. Poor man! he is dreaming of a cascade of golden ringlets, the gleam of a hazel eye, the flush of a round cheek, the lithe and willowy form of a romp on horseback, who seemed to be galloping into the very center of a gorgeous sunset, and disappearing amid its drapery of scarlet, and gold.

"Captain Northrup!" again shouted Lindsay, as he laid his hand upon his comrade's shoulder; "are you deaf, my friend?"

"No, no, I hope not."

"I have been shouting to you for an hour —or less, and you did not hear me."

"Indeed?"

"I wanted to tell you that Cæsar thinks we shall catch a 'possum to-night."

"Why, Cæsar," said Northrup turning to the guide, "do you really think we shall be so lucky?"

"Mebbe, sah; good night for 'possum, sah."

And then the three men started forward and downward, and were soon lost to sight in the deep shadow of the gap.

VIII

VALE CRUCIS

THE two officers and their guide had for hours traveled a clearly beaten pathway along the tortuous windings of a ravine, that growing broader as they descended, finally opened into a picturesque level area of considerable extent, on which three streams, uniting, formed a gigantic cross which, in the moonlight, glistened like molten silver.

"This," said Lindsay, "must be Vale Crucis."

Seating themselves on the grassy margin of the larger stream, they opened their haversacks and proceeded to satisfy their vigorous appetites, while giving rest to their weary limbs.

"You have not caught the 'possum yet, Cæsar," remarked Lindsay.

"No, sah; mought a kotched good many, sah. Dey was a stirrin' en d' bushes, sah."

"Well, we shall need them more in a day or two than we do now, and then we shall catch and eat them."

"Dey ez mighty good and fat now, sah, an' so am de coon, but de coon ez purty hard ter kotch, sah."

"Is the raccoon good to eat, Cæsar?" asked Northrup.

"Nebber eat coon meat, sah?"

"Never."

"Hit's heap sight better'n shote, sah."

"Don't smile at the captain's lack of information, Cæsar," said Lindsay. "He was raised in Boston where they never eat 'possum, and where a coon is a curiosity; be gentle with him, my colored friend."

"No, sah, I'se not gwine ter laugh at de cap'n; fer a truf dis nigger pities folks as dunno w'at 'possum meat is," replied Cæsar, with a broad grin.

Before they had fairly finished their lunch, Cæsar's acute ear caught a sound which filled him with alarm, and pointing in the direction from which it came, he whispered:

"Git flat on de groun' — dar am de sesesh."

Cæsar was right. A company of cavalry had entered the ford some little distance below, in what might be termed the body of the cross, and giving rein to their horses

were permitting them to drink. The banks of the stream where they had halted were covered with trees, but the moon, now at its meridian, revealed fully the horsemen who had entered the creek; while those still on the margin were either partially concealed or wholly hidden in the shadow of the forest.

Two ringing rifle shots were heard, and as the troop hastily and with much confusion abandoned the stream, one horse was seen to rear, plunge forward, and then fall with its rider into the water.

"Dem shots wuz fired by de bushwhackers, sah," whispered Cæsar; "we'd better be gittin' out er hyar mity fas', fo' ef de sesesh kotch us now we ez gone coons. Dey'll hang us 'fore mornin, suah."

Springing to his feet, Cæsar started off on a run followed by the officers. Fording one arm of the cross they succeeded in reaching a clump of second-growth timber, where they hoped to remain concealed; but, unfortunately, the line of escape thus hastily selected took them near a farm house, and a watch-dog, excited by their movements, barked so loudly that the troop of cavalry

was informed, as if by proclamation, of their whereabouts.

Increasing their speed they changed their course sharply under the leadership of Lindsay, and struck boldly across an open field toward a heavily wooded ridge.

The confederates, drawn to the farmhouse by the barking dog, now caught sight of the fugitives, and, with a yell, started in hot pursuit; but Lindsay and his companions were well in advance of them, and soon gained the ridge in safety.

Keeping as near together as possible; now whispering a word of caution, then uttering a low whistle to indicate where they were, with relation to each other, they pushed through vines and brush, climbed over logs and rocks, until, becoming thoroughly exhausted, they were compelled to halt for rest. They could still hear the voices of the enemy below them, and the occasional report of a gun, and hence resumed their flight as soon as they recovered the strength to do so. In probably an hour's time, they gained the summit of the ridge, and threw themselves on the ground,

suffering with thirst and almost overcome with weariness.

From the elevation on which they were, they could look down upon Vale Crucis, a picture of surpassing loveliness, set in a rugged frame of circling hills and ridges. Its great cross lay sparkling and rippling in the moonlight, a thing of marvelous beauty. Beyond the Vale and the hills, the Blue Ridge of the Alleghanies rose massive and precipitous; its peaks and promontories mantled with soft radiance, and its coves and gorges shrouded in impenetrable gloom.

"Cæsar," said Northrup, "who will reward you for your labor on this night?"

"Lo'd, Massa Northrup, dis nigger ez done paid now. If de Lo'd takes keer ob de Yankee army, us black folks ez a gwinter be free, sah, an' we ez ready to help yo'uns night an' day."

"Captain Northrup," said Lindsay, "let us push on to the bottom of this ridge; the ravine may possibly afford us water."

They started downward, but before going far were confronted by another ridge and commenced climbing again; and so they toiled slowly upward and onward. They

would have lain down until broad daylight, for they were intensely weary, but a great thirst was driving them forward, and so they struggled toward the summit and reached it about sunrise.

"I fear we shall find no water here." said Lindsay, as he looked across a wilderness of hills and ridges to a solitary mountain not far away, whose lofty summit touched the leaden sky.

"Spring some whar bout hyar, cap'n," said Cæsar. "Come hyar to hunt bar onct; eber see a bar trap, sah?"

"Never," replied Lindsay.

"Show yo' one purty soon, may be," said Cæsar as he started off alone.

In a little while Cæsar called, and going to him the officers found he had scooped out a hollow basin with his hands at the base of a projecting rock, and in it a puddle of muddy water was collecting.

"Drink," said Lindsay nodding to his companion.

"After you," returned Northrup.

Lindsay lying flat on the earth quenched his thirst, and rising, said:

"It is cool and moist, if not clear."

After Northrup had followed the example of his companion, they put their haversacks on the ground beside them, and ate their morning meal.

"Cæsar," said Lindsay, "you must catch a 'possum for us to-day; our food will soon be gone."

Cæsar expressed confidence in his ability to supply them with all the opossums needed on their journey, and the sun now falling on them warmly, they lay down to sleep.

It was nearly noonday when they awoke. Cæsar having been up and active for an hour or more, had kindled a fire and was now roasting an opossum. The scent of the fresh meat was very grateful to the officers. When the animal was nicely done, Cæsar laid it on a flat stone and presented it to them. From this and the corn bread, of which they still had a meagre supply, a very substantial and relishable meal was obtained.

"How far are we from the road Mr. McLean directed us to follow?" asked Northrup.

"Dunno, suahly, sah."

"Can you guide us to it?"

"Yasser; we go down ter de bottom ob de ridge, and keep long er little creek till we gets ter de open groun', sah. Git dar 'fore night, sah."

They started in the direction indicated by Cæsar, and soon found themselves in a narrow gorge, through which, in the rainy season, there was evidently a very considerable flow of water. The bed of the vanished stream was covered with smooth, flat rock, now entirely dry. Stepping from stone to stone, as down a rough and irregular stairway, they reached a point where the water course turned sharply to the left, and here large trees had fallen length-wise across the ravine about which a great mass of drift had gathered. Climbing the almost perpendicular bank of the ridge, they succeeded in passing this obstruction to find others a few rods farther on, but little, if any, less difficult to avoid.

While the general direction of the gorge was north and south, its course often changed abruptly, as if it were endeavoring to treat all points of the compass impartially. but as they proceeded, the space between the ridges widened and obstacles to their pro-

gress became fewer. After a time, they found pools of water, and moss on the surface of the stones; and then a little rivulet feeling its way along the lowest places, and through the seams of the rocky bed, emptied into shallow basins, from which, after resting awhile, it crept out on the farther side, and so continued its journey. Then this rivulet, uniting with others, made a brook, which became noisy and violent as it dashed down little precipices; and now the rocks were slippery, moss and ferns rank and abundant. Pretty soon the fugitives caught glimpses of an open space before them, and pushing on with better heart, soon reached a little valley of level wooded ground, probably ten acres all together.

Hearing voices down the valley, the officers stopped a moment for consultation.

"Hunter's cabin dar," said Cæsar, in answer to a look of inquiry from his companions. "May be hunters, may be bushwhackers a hidin' from de sesesh."

"In either case, we should have nothing to fear from them," remarked Northrup.

"Let us feel our way cautiously," said Lindsay. "Have your guns ready, but stand while I reconnoitre."

Lindsay now stole forward quietly, and was soon out of sight. After standing for a few moments Northrup and Cæsar started to follow, and had proceeded but a few rods, when they saw Lindsay returning, and so halted until he came to them.

"There are four men near the cabin," he said in an undertone; "rough-looking fellows, but whether armed or not, I could not ascertain."

"Probably loyal east Tennesseeans in hiding," said Northrup. "If so we are in luck."

"I think they are," returned Lindsay, "but let us take no chances. See that your carbines and pistols are in order, and let us get on to them before they have knowledge of our coming."

The steps of the three men were so cautiously chosen that no sound was heard of breaking stick under their feet, or rustling branch above their heads. Fortunately, those whom they sought to surprise were seated on a fallen tree near a rude cabin

with their attention centered on a pack of greasy cards.

"Good evening, gentlemen," said Lindsay brusquely.

The men sprang to their feet, and their hands sought, as if instinctively, the handles of their revolvers.

"Yo' come rather sudden like," exclaimed the taller man of the group.

"Yes," returned Lindsay, "we have been hunting and stumbled on you unexpectedly."

"Yo' don't seem to have been lucky, sah. Shot guns and rifles air better fer game than carbines."

"True," replied Lindsay; "but when men can't choose their weapons, they must use what they can get."

While this conversation was in progress, it occurred to Northrup that possibly the number of the strangers might be increased somewhat by the appearance of others belonging to the party who were still in the rude hut; he, therefore, kept a vigilant eye in that direction.

It was a rough, hastily constructed shelter, having a puncheon roof, but neither

windows nor doors. The interstices between the logs afforded light, and in cold weather entirely too much air for comfortable habitation.

"Wh'ar do yo' uns live?" the taller man inquired, as if still in doubt as to the purpose and character of the intruders.

"In Watauga. Do you know where Vale Crucis is?" replied Lindsay, with the unconcerned air of one who had nothing to conceal.

"Yes."

"Well, not far from there."

This conversation had attracted an inmate of the hut to an opening between the logs, and Northrup catching a glimpse of the face, was thrilled as if he had been the subject of an electric shock.

"Ahr thar any mo' of yo'r party?" asked the taller man, who evidently apprehended that the three men before him were simply the advance guard of a larger force.

"Yes!" shouted Northrup bringing his carbine to bear on the speaker; "there are fifty others coming; throw up your hands."

Lindsay's gun was in poise instantly. He had ceased to lead, but, like a good

soldier, he knew how to follow, and felt assured Northrup had good reason for thus suddenly assuming command. The two carbines covered the four men in quick succession, and their hands were lifted above their heads.

"Now, men," continued Northrup, as if speaking to a regiment, "The sound of a gun will bring fifty men here, who have been pursuing you for two days. I have no desire for blood shed; stand quietly while Cæsar takes your arms, and then you may go. Resist or hestitate, and we shall fire — choose!"

"Yo' hev us," answered the leader.

"Cæsar, disarm these men!"

The order was obeyed, and Cæsar was by no means slow when assured that his own life, and the lives of his friends depended upon his activity.

"Examine their pockets, Cæsar."

"Nothin' in dem, sah, 'cept jack knives and terbacker."

"March," said Northrup pointing to the ridge which rose abruptly from the opposite bank of the stream. "Your way of safety is there, and you cannot travel it too fast."

When the four men disappeared in the woods, Lindsay, turning to his companion, said:

"That was a bold stroke, general; are you quite sure you have not become temporarily insane? I stood by you, not because I understood you, but because I knew from the moment you leveled your gun at our departing friends we must choose between victory and death. Now tell me why did you do it?"

"Follow me," replied Northrup, "and I will do so."

Hastening to the hut, they were met at the entrance to it by a young lady in full riding habit, to whom Northrup said:

"I am Captain Northrup — allow me to introduce Captain Lindsay, and then to congratulate you on your escape."

IX

COLONEL HUSKINS IMPROVES AN OPPORTUNITY

MISS BREVAR had passed two days of anxiety and weariness, but accustomed to much outdoor exercise, she had stood up admirably under the trial. Her servants were with her in the hut and were now exceedingly demonstrative in their expressions of gladness over the fortunate change which had occurred.

"Captain Northrup," said Miss Brevar, "you are expecting others?"

"No; we are alone, and have been."

"I am mistaken then," she said with a look of surprise; "I thought — I thought I heard you say there were others coming."

"That, Miss Brevar," replied Northrup with some embarrassment of manner, "was, I trust, under the circumstances, a pardonable misstatement of fact. The enemy outnumbered us."

"Is it possible you started out alone to find me?" she asked looking into the face of the young man who had just defended

himself against the implied charge of having practiced a little deception in dealing with her abductors.

"No," he replied, "we cannot even claim the merit of that good intention. We ascertained, accidentally, that you had been carried away, and I knew you, for I had seen you once before, and when I saw your face through the interstices of the cabin, I knew, of course, you were a prisoner, and that we stood in the presence of those who forcibly detained you."

"Then you were simply hunting, and found me accidentally?"

"No; we cannot even claim truthfully to be hunters."

"Well," said the girl with a little laugh, that lighted up her face like a gleam of sunshine, "you will certainly not deny that you are very mysterious?"

"We are officers of the National army, Miss Brevar, endeavoring to find our way through this apparently endless labyrinth of mountains, hills and ridges, to the Union lines."

The color receded from her face, and an expression of grave doubt fell upon it.

She stood silent, but her look demanded from Northrup further explanation.

"Captain Lindsay and I captured your brother and others on the Yadkin, and were with Mr. McLean when you met him on the evening of your abduction."

The girl was still perplexed, trembling and silent.

"Have no fear," said Northrup, "we shall accompany you to your home, and are ready to start thither at once."

She hestitated a moment longer, and then with a trembling voice said:

"No, no, if you are Federals you would not do that — it would not be safe for you to do it."

"We would not for any light consideration," said Northrup, "take avoidable chances of recapture; but we cannot leave you in this wilderness alone."

The girl was still in doubt. She could not understand why this man should propose to incur the risks of recapture and imprisonment to help an unfortunate person in whom he could have no possible interest. Was he sincere? Had she not fallen into even worse hands than those of Rutherford,

who, seeking money, was negotiating for her release? In her sore perplexity, the tears came, but finally, with a voice broken by a sob, she said:

"I will go with you — I — don't know what else to do; I cannot remain in this horrible place another night."

There were four horses corralled near the cabin, besides those of Miss Brevar and her servants. Lindsay and Northrup, selecting the three best, and allowing the other to go at large, started with the rescued party down the little valley, which, as they proceeded, narrowed to a ravine, and afforded merely room for a rough, undulating path. In many places, indeed, the ridges rose so abruptly on either hand that they were obliged to descend into the stream, and make their way slowly over the loose rock and drift which encumbered its bed. After a while, however, they reached another and larger strip of level land, and were able to make more rapid progress; finally, as the sun was setting, they entered a mountain road, the right arm of which bore off in an easterly direction. Taking this they urged their horses to a trot, and

so proceeded on their way toward the Blue Ridge.

Lindsay and Northrup were abreast at the head of the column. Miss Brevar came next, and the three servants followed in the rear. Very little had been said. Lindsay was taciturn, and to any other eye than Northrup's would have appeared sullen and morose; but Northrup was too much absorbed in his own delightful thoughts to see any one, or know anything, except that he had in some way become the guardian of Miss Alice Brevar. There were hundreds of men searching, and yet out of all he had been chosen by fate to find her. Certainly this could not be blind fate. It was doubtless one of the mysterious but not infrequent arrangements of an overruling Providence. Such unexpected meetings were occurring every hour in the day; all brought about by combinations of incidents, apparently accidental, indeed, but evidently parts of an intelligent plan, and for the accomplishment of wise and beneficent purposes. Take for illustration the girl, born and reared in a cottage on the banks of the Rhine, and the rough farmer boy living in

a rude hut in the wilds of Minnesota; by and by they begin to gravitate toward each other; sometimes going far indeed out of the direct line, but still drawn by a kindly Providence nearer and nearer, until they finally meet and recognize the fact that it was a part of the great scheme of creation that they should be man and wife, and rear up a family in which the blood of nations long separated and often at war should at last mingle in peace. And so the great cause was bringing distant peoples together from the four quarters of the globe, and with every conceivable attendant circumstance, that they might intermarry, become brethren, and so hasten the day when the lion and the lamb should lie down together, and a little child should lead them.

"Captain Northrup," said Lindsay.

But Northrup was too far at sea to land at a moment's notice. There was his own father, descended from a passenger of the Mayflower, born and bred in New England, and his good mother reared amid the gardens and flowers of suburban London. What an infinite variety of little incidents or apparent accidents brought them to-

gether! Had there been one less in their own lives, or in those of their great-great-grandparents, centuries ago, they would never have met. The identical individual known as Henry Northrup would not have existed; but Providence had so controlled the currents or managed the drift that —

"Captain Northrup," broke in Lindsay again, and rather loudly.

"Sir; my good friend," responded Northrup.

"Are you quite sure you are not taking yourself back to a dungeon, and me to the gallows?"

"Pardon me, Captain Lindsay," returned Northrup, bringing his horse to a full stop. "I did not think of the danger you would necessarily incur in going back. You must go no further; take Cæsar and make your way northward at once. Really, I have been very thoughtless."

"But what of yourself, Captain Northrup?"

"I risk simply my liberty — a few days or months, more or less, of imprisonment. It is not so with you; your life is at stake. I have endangered it too far already," and

then Northrup, extending his hand ,said: "Leave, and at once. Good-bye. I shall find you again when the war is over. We do not part, I am sure, for the last time."

It was dark, but Lindsay knew from the choking in Northrup's voice that tears were in his eyes. Taking the extended hand he said:

"No; not for the last time, and not at all. I can die, if need be, for it is appointed unto all once to die, and it matters little, I take it, whether we go soon or late; but I cannot desert a comrade and will not."

"No, no, Captain Lindsay; I shall not consent to this," protested Northrup.

"Say no more. I would travel this road now if it led to hell;" and Lindsay, giving spur to his horse, the company moved on.

The fair Alice began to wonder what manner of men these were who had picked up a stranger, and proposed to carry her through an enemy's country to her home. They were manifesting traits of character rather new to her limited experience. She felt that they might be trusted and her conscience suggested, also, that she was perhaps doing an ungenerous act in permit-

ting men who had already hazarded their lives for her safety to encounter further perils in her behalf, and of so grave a nature. She knew very well what an intense hatred the Southern people entertained for men like these, and while there was perhaps no feeling of bitterness in her own heart, she would have confessed very readily to a strong prejudice against them, and a decided dislike to the cause for which they fought. But they were evidently gentlemen who had convictions, and the courage to stand by them; they had, moreover, been very kind to her, and she would be sorry to have them get into trouble while doing her a service.

Could she protect them against the enmity of her own neighbors, or obtain their release if they were to fall into the hands of the Confederates? She feared not. Her father and family were influential, indeed, but the authorities would hardly consider a kindness shown to a simple girl as of sufficient importance to warrant them in giving liberty to these Federal officers. No, no, that would be asking too much. The lives of many men were doubtless risked

to capture them. A kindness to one woman, or even the saving of the lives of many women, would be no adequate compensation for their release and return to the Federal army.

While these thoughts, and many others of a kindred nature, were passing through her mind, the moon had climbed to the top of the Blue Ridge, and was gilding the high lands. The road had, for an hour or more, been exceedingly rough, winding around hills and quite frequently through little gaps which led over the ridges. Progress was necessarily slow, and it must have been quite eight o'clock in the evening, when, from the crest of a mountain spur, the party looked down upon Vale Crucis. They were traveling eastward, and the moon was still too low to present perfectly all the picturesque loveliness of the valley and its environment of wooded hills. A glimmer of brightness suggested, rather than revealed, the outline of the cross, and the open area of level land about it was chequered with dim lights and black shadows. The tops of the hills were luminous indeed, but the sides and bases were still

shrouded in darkness. Beyond these and above them the summit of the Blue Ridge lay like a fantastically shaped cloud along the horizon, its burnished peaks apparently supported by the air midway between earth and heaven.

Miss Brevar, whose thoughts were still dwelling on the risks which the officers ran of being recaptured, and on her own inability to afford them protection, touched her horse lightly and placed herself beside Northrup.

"Gentlemen," she began, "you have been very kind, but don't go any further; I fear it may not be safe for you. I know the road from Vale Crucis home very well."

"No," replied Northrup, "we cannot leave you in this wilderness alone at this hour of the night."

"But my servants are with me."

"They could afford you no protection."

"But, sir, you are in an enemy's country; it is not so with me; the people are my friends."

"I would be glad if you could induce my friend, Captain Lindsay, to return, for I

know he hazards much. My own risks are small—comparatively, very small."

"But you have perhaps not considered that I could not protect you in the least, or secure your release, if captured."

"No, I had not thought of that," responded Northrup gallantly; "but if I really thought you would do so if you could, it would recompense me fully for any service I may be able to render you."

What did he mean? If spoken lightly, it was in mockery of her earnestness; if seriously meant, it suggested possibilities for which she was now utterly unprepared. In either case, it were better she should resume her old position in the rear, and this she did.

Who was this young man, so roughly clad, and yet with a voice, speech and bearing so suggestive of a life of leisure and refinement? Why had he noticed and remembered her? and why should he now insist upon this dangerous service? Why should any one, indeed, and of all the world, why should he? He was at war with her dearest friends, with the flag she had been

taught to reverence, with the cause she believed most just — an alien and an enemy, whom even her brother would rejoice to see discomfited and in prison.

They had by this time reached Vale Crucis, and passing over the main branch of the stream, or body of the cross, had entered a grove of small timber, when they were startled by a command to halt. Instantly fifty men sprang from the shadows of the roadside, and enclosed them in a circle of leveled guns. Lindsay and Northrup instinctively grasped their weapons, but it was apparent that any resistance they might make would lead to the destruction of Miss Brevar and the servants, as well as of themselves.

Captain Lindsay demanded to know why and by whom their journey was interrupted, but instead of obtaining a reply he was bluntly asked:

"What lady have you there?"

He attempted to explain, but his voice was drowned in a volley of emphatic oaths.

"Who is she?" they again shouted.

"Miss Brevar —"

The remainder of what he said or desired to say was lost in the great uproar which followed.

"We know yo'; we hev bin lookin' fer yo'," said a voice, sounding above the confusion of tongues; "let some one carry the lady to the camp — now pull the fellows from thar hosses — disarm them — forward!"

Lindsay and Northrup were hurried into the woods amid maledictions and epithets too profane and indecent to record. Pretty soon it was suggested that the prisoners had not only carried the young girl off, but had treated her brutally, and then it was suggested that their own wives and daughters were unsafe so long as such men were permitted to live. Finally, a proposition was made to hang them, and this being received with demoniac shouts of approval, the mob halted in an open space and gathered about the prisoners in a violent and noisy mass.

"Take halters from the hosses," cried a voice which Lindsay recognized, and looking about him he discerned the landlord of the Gap Inn. Feeling satisfied Huskins, as well as the others, had, in the darkness and

excitement of the occasion mistaken them for a part of Rutherford's gang, and that it was only necessary to undeceive him to secure at least temporary safety, Lindsay appealed boldly to the landlord to identify and protect them.

"Gentlemen," said he, in a voice which could be heard above the din, "permit me to tell you that you are making a mistake. We are not the men you suppose us to be."

"No, no," retorted Huskins with cruel sarcasm; "no; yo'r not th' men yo' aint; yo' air out on hossback this time o'night fo' recreation. Hurry up th' halters; they'r entirely too good for this world, they air."

This speech was greeted with laughter, yells and oaths. "Yo' hit it, colonel; stretch 'em up."

"Men," again shouted Lindsay, "there is at least one person here who knows us, and who should know we were simply conducting the young lady to her friends. Colonel Lafayette Huskins can bear witness to that, and I call upon him to do so."

"It's a lie," retorted Huskins as he came pushing through the crowd with a rope in

his hand. "It's a lie; I kin bar witness to no sich thing."

"String 'em up," shouted a score of voices.

The landlord of the Gap Inn seizing the rope which had by this time been thrust around Lindsay's neck, threw the end over a limb, and catching it as it fell gave a violent jerk; but Lindsay by an exertion of strength prompted by the desperateness of his situation, cast off the men who had dragged him forward, and grasping the rope above his head with both hands, relaxed to some extent the strangling pressure at his throat.

"Pull," shouted Huskins, and the weight of a dozen men was added to his own, and Lindsay was lifted from his feet and swung in the air.

McLean, to whom Miss Brevar had been conducted, ascertained from her the particulars of her abduction by Rutherford, her release by Northrup and Lindsay, and their journey thus far toward her home. Suspecting that the yells which he heard not far away boded no good to the men who had rendered him so important a service on

the Yadkin, he proceeded as rapidly as possible to the scene of the disturbance.

With a curse upon the mob and a quick blow of his knife, he severed the rope to which Lindsay was attached, and then running to the other group, which for want of a leader had not gone so far toward the execution of their threats, he released Northrup also, and proclaimed to those about him that the gentlemen were the friends and rescuers of Miss Brevar, and not her enemies and abductors.

When Lindsay's rope was cut he fell prostrate, and although somewhat confused, still had the sense to know a friendly hand had interferred in his behalf, and that the moment of extreme peril had passed away. Staggering to his feet he unlooosed the rope from about his neck, cast it from him, and then gazed intently and searchingly upon the shadowy forms around him. They were silent and apparently much disconcerted; finally discovering Huskins, who had seized a gun, he sprang toward him, threw up the muzzle of the weapon in time to avoid its contents, caught the landlord by the throat with the grasp of a vise, and delivered in

his face a succession of blows, either one of which was apparently sufficient to have felled an ox. At this juncture, McLean came rushing back and discovering the turn affairs had taken, exclaimed: "Hold! no violence, Captain Lindsay; these are friends."

Throwing Huskins from him, as if he were a loose bundle of rags, Lindsay turned on McLean: "Friends!" he shouted indignantly, "is this the way men are entertained by their friends in North Carolina?"

"But, Captain," persisted McLean, "this has been a mistake — a grave mistake."

"No, no," retorted Lindsay angrily, "there was no mistake. It was a deliberate and well nigh successful attempt at murder. That despicable, cowardly, vindictive wretch," pointing to Huskins, who had managed to raise his bleeding face from the ground and assume a sitting posture, "that villain, at least, knew me, and knew I had no connection with the abduction of Miss Brevar."

"Wretch! vindictive — cowardly — villain," muttered Colonel Huskins, as with hands clasped about his knees, his head

vibrated to and fro like a pendulum, "despicable — wretch! Great Gord, shall sich langwidge be addressed to a Huskins — to one whose gran'father fit under Gineral Sevier in the revolutionary war?" But when McLean took Lindsay's arm and walked away, the tone of Colonel Huskins suddenly changed from an unobtrusive wail of sorrow and deep humiliation to an obstreperous song of denunciation, defiance and revenge. "Blood shall atone for this, gen'lemen; mark what I say, *blood!* I'll challenge him. I'll hev satisfaction; no man shall address opprobrious langwidge to a Huskins an' live. I'll hev his heart's blood. I will, gen'lemen, so help me Gord!"

X

THE AIR ICY AND WATERS ROUGH

IN explanation of the violent and hasty action of the men who had captured Lindsay and Northrup, and so nearly succeeded in depriving them of life, McLean said that now, for nearly four years, in the mountain regions of North Carolina and Tennessee the civil law had been practically abandoned. The bitter and relentless feud existing between those who were loyal to the old flag, and those who had rallied under the new, had resolved society into a condition of lawless anarchy; trivial disputes were not infrequently settled with the shot gun, pistol or bowie-knife, while those suspected of grave offenses were summarily punished by the rope or torch.

"Many of the men now here," he continued, "would be at their homes if they dared remain there; but to avoid death, or what they regard as still worse, conscription, they congregate in the hills and steal to their families occasionally under cover of night. Their wives and children are much of the

time, therefore, alone and defenceless. These are not often disturbed, it is true, and yet they may, at any time, be made the victims of brutal men. It is for this reason that in the minds of these fathers and husbands the most heinous crime that can be committed is the very one of which you were suspected. The men with me on this expedition are not, by any means, all avowed unionists; some are as nearly non-committal on the subject of the war as it is possible for them to be. They endeavor to so act as to incur the enmity of neither side, and find safety, and perhaps some pecuniary profit, in adroitly adjusting their political convictions to accommodate the party temporarily in possession of the country. From age or some physical defect, either feigned or real, they are, or are supposed to be, unfitted for military duty. By aiding in the search for Hugh Brevar's daughter, they undertsand very well they are rendering a service which will commend them to the confederates, and at the same time gratify me, and thus enable them to fraternize with that loyal element from which very often they have had reason to apprehend danger.

As to those whom I may term my own followers, they are here because they are safer with the expedition than away from it."

The three men had now reached the bank of the larger stream which formed the body of the cross, at a point where it abandoned the little valley and pursued its way through a narrow and dark ravine, bounded on either side by precipitous ridges. Following the course of the stream as nearly as the uneven and rugged character of the ground would admit, they soon descended into a small, semi-circular level area, or cove, covered with grass, which, at a former period, had evidently been a basin or reservoir of the creek. Passing by many camp fires, McLean conducted his friends to a little niche in the further side of this open space, where they found Miss Brevar.

Her servants, assisted by Cæsar, were busily engaged about a fire cooking meats, potatoes and corn bread, and making such other preparations for the evening meal as were possible under the circumstances. Lindsay and Northrup had fasted since twelve o'clock, and were ready to respond eagerly and cheerfully to any proposition

which involved the indulgence of their appetites.

Miss Brevar, who knew nothing of what had transpired during the last half hour, greeted the officers cordially, and expressed her gratification at their having fallen into such friendly hands.

"As for me," she continued, with a perceptible twinkle in her brown eyes, and looking toward McLean, "I am unfortunate; I have again been captured by the enemy. What uncle Davy proposes to do with me, I don't know, but he will be very severe, I am quite sure."

"Yes, you tom-boy," retorted McLean, good humoredly, "I'll cure you of this habit of riding about the country like a fox hunter, you may be sure of that."

"What fearful punishment do you propose, uncle?"

"I think I shall have you taken north, where all captured rebels are sent, to be held until the war ends."

"That would be terrible."

"Captain Northrup," continued McLean, with mock solemnity, "would you undertake the task of conducting this rebel pris-

oner to the lines of the national army, and turning her over to the authorities?"

"The task would be an agreeable one, certainly," returned Northrup, with a smile, "if the prisoner were to promise not to make resistance; but in the absence of such a pledge, I should not have the courage to undertake it."

Was there a perceptible flush in the face of the fair Alice, or did the golden locks of her shapely head tinge, by reflection, the clear texture of brow and cheek? Maybe, indeed, and this is the more reasonable conjecture, the shadowy flame was simply the reflex glow of the camp fire.

"I should resist," she said, coolly.

"Then," replied Northrup seriously, "the task would be an impossible one."

The dinner being now ready they partook of it in that primitive fashion, which we have reason to conclude was followed by the first families of the world during the period immediately preceding the advent of Tubal Cain, and yet all the silver and gold that ever adorned the table of an epicure could not have rendered the nicely roasted venison more delicious, nor the corn-bread

and potatoes more relishable. Health and exercise had transformed a simple and homely meal into a rich and luxurious feast.

"Alice," said McLean, "I desire to put you east of the Blue Ridge before sunrise; we shall, therefore. leave this place at midnight. You will have three hours for rest; let Diana arrange your blankets so you can get a little sleep."

"Thank you, uncle; I feel a little tired, but do not care to sleep just now."

"Will you remain here until morning. Captain Lindsay?" asked McLean.

"I think not," replied Lindsay, "we must make up for lost time. The moon will be at its meridian by twelve o'clock, and afford sufficient light to enable us to pick our way over hills and ridges. I think, if Captain Northrup is ready, we shall start when you do."

Northrup made no response. The young man was once more at sea, but now the air was icy, the waters rough, and the prospect gloomy.

He had risked his life for this girl — a matter of no great consequence, perhaps,

but it was the most important sacrifice he had to offer, and yet it had not impressed her greatly, perhaps not at all. She had manifested some slight feeling, it is true, when she urged them on the score of their own personal safety to turn back and leave her to complete the journey alone. She had even expressed her thanks to them with gentle warmth, but she would doubtless have offered the same tribute to any servant who had rendered her a service. It seemed to him he had known her for an age; certainly, it seemed a long time since she had become the all-absorbing subject of his thoughts. But was he not a fool to entertain a scheme which all present and prospective circumstances forbade? She was here; his duty called him elsewhere; his personal safety demanded his immediate departure. He had no time, therefore, to make the slow approaches to her good favor which etiquette and perhaps decency required; but if he had, what chance of success was there? He was counted among the enemies of what she had been educated to regard as her country; the members of her family believed, doubt-

less, this country's existence and their own personal honor depended upon the defeat and humiliation of the army in which he fought. He would soon be separated from her by mountain ranges. These, however, were slight obstructions when compared with the feuds, animosities and prejudices which divided the people of the two sections. To his friends, disloyalty was the synonym of all that was wicked and detestable in the individual. To her's loyalty to the Union was regarded as the embodiment of cowardice, roguery and oppression. What hope, therefore, could he have of winning her? She had, or would have, doubtless, a score of suitors, whose laurels had been won in fighting for a cause she esteemed just; the chances would be against him, indeed, in an equal contest, where he could meet her in safety and on fair terms; but now the struggle was hopeless — he would be a fool no longer.

"Captain Lindsay," he said, springing to his feet, "I am ready to start now; let us make a good long journey before sunrise."

Lindsay, sensible man, was sound asleep, and had for the hour forgotten the fearful

experiences of the evening, and was dreaming doubtless of the pleasant northern home, with its encompassing fields of fruit and grain, where all of his earlier and most of his later years had flowed away like the waters of a peaceful river.

"Captain Northrup," said McLean, looking up in surprise, "why this sudden change — this haste? Let Lindsay sleep and get some rest yourself. You will make all the more progress for it."

"I fear Captain Northrup regrets the time wasted in my service," remarked Miss Brevar, as if she were, in some way, perhaps to blame for the delay.

"Not in the least;" replied Northrup, and then pausing a moment, as if all had not been said ordinary politeness required, he looked into the brown eyes of the girl, and forgetting the resolution of a moment ago, added, "A lifetime could be happily spent in such a service."

If, indeed, there be an almost fathomless abyss in the physical and moral structure of man popularly termed the bottom of his heart, these few simple words must have come from the very nethermost re-

cesses of that remote region, and they came too, with such a quiet and solemn vehemence that they temporarily knocked the fair Alice quite off her poise, and even staggered the equilibrium of the hard-headed and unsusceptible McLean.

The camp fire had been replenished by Cæsar and his colored co-laborers, and the flame which blazed up cheerfully was mirrored for the second time to-night in the clear complexion of the girl.

Her mental vision, always acute, began at last to discover in this young man the glimmer of a sentiment which has, from time immemorial, created little private revolutions, individual secessions, and personal confederacies, and then, finally, if circumstances were favorable, resolved, amid tears of joy, storms of God-bless-you's, cascades of wine, and wildernesses of flowers, into one glorious and indivisible union.

"Miss Brevar," continued Northrup, determinedly, "I desire to speak to you and must speak now; it is my only opportunity, and one which, a moment ago, I had abandoned as hopeless; even now, desperate as I am, I would not avail myself of it,

were not a friend and representative of your father present, in the person of Mr. McLean, to hear what I have to say."

"Sir," interrupted Miss Brevar uneasily, "do not say more."

"We separate to-night," he continued unmindful of her protest; "I may not see you again for years — possibly never; surely the expression of that natural sentiment which God has implanted in the heart of all, and which has found voice at the lips of honest men and women since the days of Adam, should not wound your feelings, and can not compromise your honor. I speak now, because I must do so, if I speak at all. If you bid me not to hope, I shall regret my failure, but not my effort to succeed."

The color receded temporarily from Miss Brevar's face, and she trembled slightly, but she rose from her seat, and standing before him, face to face, said modestly, but firmly:

"I am sorry you have said so much; I — I — do not know you, sir — that is to say, I only know you are a brave —gentleman — you have been very kind to me — but you are a stranger."

She was about to resume her seat, when, under the inspiration of a new thought, she hesitated ,then turned toward him again, and said:

"Come, let us walk down to the brook together; you must not go away feeling any unkindness for one whose life you have perhaps saved."

The fair Alice gathered up her long riding dress, and the two passed from the shadow of the forest covered ridge into the moonlit area, and so down to the stream, which rippled across one end of the little cove.

She had not sought her companion's confidence, and possibly had hardly surmised the existence of more than a sentiment of friendship; if, indeed, more was suspected, she had hoped for his sake she might be mistaken; but now that the manly avowal had been made, like a womanly woman, whose brain was cool, and whose heart was honest, she felt that there could be no harm in according him the gentle treatment due from a sister to a brother, or from friend to friend. It may be thought girlish modesty, or what may be known as a sense of

propriety, would have sealed the lips of a well-bred and pure-hearted young woman, under such circumstances, but this is probably an error.

Nothing short of perverted instincts and defective education could make a woman shame-faced or silent at such a time, and induce her to treat her admirer as if he had sought to insult or dishonor her. To a superior girl like Alice Brevar, whose quickness of thought, independence of spirit and perfect self-possession, enabled her to respond as promptly to the impulses of a generous nature, as the well-bred steed to the spur of its rider; nothing could be more natural than an effort to banish from Northrup's mind, if possible, all sense of the grief and mortification which may have resulted from his failure. Silence and anger, real or feigned, would under the circumstances, have indicated a moral and mental condition neither good to possess nor pleasant to contemplate.

The woman, who, if unaffected by passion herself, cannot meet her lover frankly and fairly, and entertain him kindly, must certainly be deficient in mental resource, if

not in good sense; for at such a period he is overwhelmed by defeat, while she is flattered and strengthened by being the recipient of a great tribute to her personal charms, and hence, for the time, infinitely his superior.

XI

THE BUSHWHACKER AT HOME

LINDSAY and Northrup had followed secluded roads and winding paths for weeks, traveling mainly by night and seeking rest and shelter by day in the jungles of the forest.

They had crossed the great mountain range separating North Carolina from Tennessee, and were now struggling among the foot-hills of its western slope. They had avoided, as far as possible, the haunts of man, preferring the dangerous proximity of wild beasts to that of their own kind. Their progress had been very slow, and their clothing so mutilated by brush and briars, that it afforded little protection against the severer autumn winds.

Cæsar was still with them; indeed without the ever ready help of this cheerful and faithful servant, the pangs of hunger would long since have been added to their other discomforts and sufferings.

His sight was keen, and the mountains familiar to him; he could find, beneath

leaves or brush, or laurel thicket, the spring that would have remained hidden from less experienced eyes. In early evening, as they were starting on their journey, or in the early morning, as worn and tired they were seeking a place of rest and safety, his ear was quick to detect the rustle among the fallen leaves which denoted the step of the slow and stealthy opossum, or the bolder and more rapid movements of the raccoon; and whenever he failed at such times to obtain the food necessary for the party's subsistence, he would, with his gun, steal off during the day, while his white companions were sleeping, and always have something ready when they awoke to satisfy their appetites. He was uncomplaining and indefatigable in his devotion to them, never thinking of his own wants, but ever as mindful of theirs as a parent of the slightest demands of a child. His practiced eye never failed to discover the dim outline of the path they sought to follow, even when it was indistinguishable to others.

The rain was now pouring down in torrents; it began to fall at noon, and feeling assured a night of intense darkness was be-

fore them, the fugitives had sought the public highway early in the evening. The moon would not rise until after midnight, but the sky was so black they entertained little hope that it would even then afford them any assistance. The stars, often consulted by the officers to verify Cæsar's knowledge of the country, and assure themselves they were going in the right direction, were of course completely hidden, and so, benumbed and shivering, they stumbled on through the darkness, in a blind uncertain way, often colliding with the stumps and stones which obstructed a rough road that could be discerned only by its being a shade less intensely black than the dense forest through which it ran.

The wind had been rising since nightfall, and soon the atmosphere grew colder; the rain turned to snow and sleet, and these were dashed against them with an angry violence which searched out every rent in their tattered garments, and penetrated with icy chilliness to the very marrow of their bones. Their shoes had been hanging together by shreds for days, but the soles,

very thin indeed, had thus far afforded some protection to their feet. To-night, however, Northrup had lost one of his altogether, and although his foot was bruised and bleeding, he had traveled some hours without adding to the discomfort of his friends by referring to his misfortune. But finally, the foot gave him such intense pain he was obliged to ask his companions to stop for a time that he might relieve it.

"Why, Cap'n Northrup," exclaimed Cæsar, "has yo' los' yo' shoe, sah?"

"Yes, Cæsar, some time ago."

Cæsar immediately removed from his own foot, a rough covering of untanned skin, and offering it to Northrup, said:

"H'yar, Cap'n Northrup, put dis shoe on, sah; not berry good shoe, but heap better'n none, sah."

"No, no, Cæsar," replied Northrup, in a tone which indicated that he was touched by the poor fellow's generosity, "I cannot do that, Cæsar."

"Why, Massa Northrup," returned Cæsar, in surprise, "yo' can git dat shoe on, sah; hit's big nuff, suahly, sah."

"You are very kind, Cæsar," said Northrup cheerfully, "but I cannot take it; your foot would soon be as badly torn as mine."

"Oh no, sah; dis nigga's foot mighty tough, sah; go bar'foot mos' de time, sah. Nebber war' shoes 'cept in winter, en not berry of'n den, sah. Put de shoe on, Massa Northrup; it kin' o' pinches my foot any way, sah, an' I'd like to hab yo' tote hit for me, sah,"

That Cæsar did not adhere to the truth in this argument was very evident, for the shoe he held out for Northrup's acceptance, had been constructed with too great a disregard for economy in the use of materials, to cramp the foot of anybody. It was wide and long and soft, with the hair of the animal turned inside to make it warm and comfortable to the wearer; but if the end ever justified the means, surely it did in this instance. Certainly Cæsar's companions thought none the less of him for this barefaced, yet unsuccessful attempt to deceive.

"No, Cæsar," said Northrup, firmly, "you must tote you own shoe."

At Lindsay's suggestion, Northrup now tore off the flap of his coat, and in this carefully wrapped the disabled foot, using a tough leather string which Cæsar supplied, to bind the covering to its place. This done, they resumed their journey, for in such a storm it would have been idle to seek even the partial shelter of the woods.

They were now chilled to the bone, and without the little warmth afforded by exercise, must have perished. They moved haltingly and slowly, and after a time came to a mountain stream, ordinarily containing little water, but now so swollen by the rain that in the darkness it appeared like a broad and rapid river.

Sensible the flood could not make them more thoroughly wet than they were, and conjecturing that the stream might, after all, be a less formidable obstruction to their progress than it seemed, Lindsay waded into it cautiously, but soon discovered the water was so deep and the current so swift that it would be utterly impossible to ford it.

The fugitives now turned to each other for consultation.

"Cæsar," said Lindsay, "what stream is this?"

"Branch dat puts inter de Nolechucky ribber sah."

"Any house, barn, shed, or shelter of any kind near?"

"De nearest, sah, ez a house on nudder road, dat crosses dis one short way back; half mile ter de cross road, sah, an' den half mile ferder on dat ter de lef' an' yer git ter de house, sah."

"Let us go," said Lindsay; "it is death to remain here; it can certainly be no worse there."

They turned and retraced their steps for a distance, which, measured by their impapatience and discomfort, seemed a league. Then finding the cross road, they followed it until they finally came to what appeared to be a break or opening in the forest. A dog began to bark fiercely, and going in the direction of the sound they came at last to a log cabin.

While Cæsar endeavored to pacify the watch-dog, Lindsay climbed the worm fence, which separated the house from the field over which they had traveled since

leaving the public highway, and rapped loudly for admission. This failing to arouse the inmates, he resumed the knocking with such violence it seemed as if the door must give away before him. Finally, they heard some one moving within, and a thin, piping voice, evidently that of a woman, cried:

"Who's thar?"

"Three travelers who have lost their way, and are perishing in the storm," replied Lindsay.

"Go on ter next house half mile furder," returned the voice; "I'm a lone woman an' can't let yer in."

"For God's sake," cried Lindsay, whose jaws chattered in the bitter cold, so he could not articulate distinctly, "open the door; I tell you we are perishing."

"Go on," replied the voice; "don't trouble a poor woman this time o' night."

"Madam," said Lindsay, "it is a matter of life or death with us; we shall not, therefore, stand longer on ceremony. If you do not open the door instantly we shall break it down."

"Who dar' talk about breakin' into my house," demanded a rough voice; "leave hyar, or I'll put a bullet through the do'."

"Shoot and be d—d," retorted Lindsay, now thoroughly out of patience. "Open the door!"

He heard the hammer of a gun click within, and then the same voice shouted back at him:

"Gor way; if yer try ter git inter this house ter-night, thar'll be a funeral ter-morrow."

Lindsay made no reply, but stepping to the fence took a heavy rail from it, and placing it upon his shoulders sprang forward, striking this extemporized battering ram against the door with such violence as to drive it from its fastenings, and send it to the middle of the cabin.

"Sir," said he rushing into the room with a revolver in his hand, followed by Northrup and Cæsar, "if I am to die to-night, I prefer a bullet; it furnishes a warmer, quicker and altogether more comfortable mode of exit than that offered by the storm."

His opponent stood with rifle in hand, but the sudden crash of the door and appear-

ance of the intruders had evidently disconcerted him. Lindsay continued:

"Is it peace or war?"

"Peace," returned the man, doggedly.

"Then put down the gun, and put wood on the fire, for I tell you man we are nearly frozen."

"Sah," said the east Tennesseean apologetically, "these are dangerous times, when it isn't safe to open yo' do' at night to every strolling band that comes along."

"True," replied Lindsay, "but it is safer to-night to admit us to your roof and fireside, than to attempt to reject us."

The coals on the hearth were soon uncovered, and the great fire-place filled with logs, interspersed with pine knots.

When the host had completed his preparation of the fire, he placed a wooden bench before it, and invited his guests to be seated. Then, as the dry knots began to crackle and blaze, and the room lighted up, he looked, in an inquisitive, but not unkindly way, at Lindsay, and asked:

"Didn't I see yo' on the Blue Ridge?"

"Possibly," replied Lindsay; "I was there."

"Yo'r escaped union officers?"

"Yes."

"Sally," continued the Tennesseean, turning to the bed which occupied one corner of the room, "git up, these air frien's."

Then going to a cupboard standing against the wall near the chimney, he produced a brown stone jug of apple jack, and placing it before his guests, invited them to help themselves.

This mildly strengthening stimulant, which in the mountain regions of east Tennessee and west North Carolina is the universal panacea for all ills, both present and prospective, had a most marvelously rejuvenating effect on Cæsar; his face became quite radiant with good humor and shone with all the resplendent gloss of highly polished ebony; while his feet were with great difficulty restrained by an imperious will from carrying him off into a double shuffle.

If it were indeed true, as Cæsar had asserted an hour or two ago, that the capacious shoes which spread out beneath him like the bases of great gravy bowls, impinged upon the space naturally belonging to his feet and so rendered them a painful

and unnecessary encumbrance, he had now become utterly unconscious of it. In fact, the shoes, if it be no disrespect to such huge receptacles to refer to them by so common a title, seemed to be instinct with healthful life, and rose and fell with a measured clap as if they might be keeping time to some plantation melody now piping in Cæsar's heart.

In justice to Cæsar's reputation for veracity, however, it should be said that if by any possibility he was mistaken a few hours ago, in supposing the shoes did pinch him, and that he could not, therefore, be perfectly happy unless Captain Northrup would be kind enough to "tote" them for him, it can, on the other hand, be affirmed to Cæsar's credit, that he was absolutely correct when he asserted the Captain could get them on; for to use his own language they were "big nuff, suahly."

The good wife, a spare, delicate woman, who had evidently had no holiday time of it thus far in life, soon set before the guests a substantial lunch, consisting of corn-bread and pork, to which they did ample justice. After the meal was ended, she cleared off

the table with silent cheerfulness and returned to her bed.

The four men, in no wise inclined to sleep, now gathered before the fire to talk over the situation. The Tennesseean a tall, rawboned, athletic man, who either chewed or smoked tobacco incessantly, was just now puffing away at a pipe, the stem of which was a small branch of elder-wood, while the bowl was simply the base of a corn cob, hollowed out.

Cæsar, with an eye to business, had immediately after supper obtained a raccoon skin, which, with many others, was pinned to the walls of the cabin, and was now busily engaged, with a knife, in lieu of a needle, and leather strings for thread, in fashioning a shoe for Captain Northrup.

"How far is it from here to Greenville?" asked Lindsay.

The Tennesseean informed them it was twenty miles by the direct road, but fully twice as far by any of the mountain paths it would be safe for them to travel. The substance of the information obtained from their host, as to the situation in their immediate vicinity, combined with that subse-

quently gathered, was simply this: The rebel General Hood was then (November, 1864), menacing middle Tennessee, while Breckinridge, with a view to creating a diversion in his favor, was concentrating troops between Jonesboro' and Knoxville, for the purpose, apparently, of invading Kentucky by way of Cumberland Gap. A part of the forces now being thus consolidated, had, for the last few weeks, been somewhat scattered and actively engaged in scouring the country in quest of bands of federal sympathizers. It was their recent presence and activity in the counties of Tennessee bordering on North Carolina which had induced the loyal Tennesseeans, whom Lindsay and Northrup first met at Brevar's, to seek safety by crossing the mountain range and rendezvousing temporarily on the Blue Ridge.

"Yo' mus' hug the mountains," said the Tennesseean, "till yo' git by Knoxville; then a'mos' any one can guide yo' to the federal camps."

"Do you see the confederates often?" asked Lindsay.

"Yas; when yo' fust banged at th' do', I was suah a squad of confederates that couldn't git across th' creek had come hyar, an' I was gittin' ready to run; but then I made up my min' they was may be not soldiers after all, an' I would chance 'em rather'n out in the storm; and, finally, yo'uns come sudden like, an' I couldn't help myself."

Cæsar, having now nearly finished the shoe, put it on the captain's foot, while he made the necessary measurements to enable him to fasten it securely about the ankle; but before this service had been fairly completed, the fierce barking of the faithful watch-dog instantly silenced the inmates of the cabin, and made every ear attentive to catch the slightest sound from without.

The elements were still holding high carnival; from afar came the muffled roar of the storm in conflict with hills and ridges; nearer, the rattle and creak of swaying trees in the valley; still nearer, the shriek and wail of the wind around gables and corners. It was a fearful night, but less terrible, Lindsay thought, than the gloom of the dungeon, and even cheerful when contrasted

with the horrors of the gallows. He, therefore, glanced about him eagerly to ascertain what opportunities there were for escape, in case the alarm sounded by the sentinal of the household should indicate the approach of enemies.

There was, so far as he could observe, but one place of exit, the door by which they entered. The openings for the admission of light were too small to admit of the passage of a full grown man. The house was, however, well calculated for defense; the rough, unhewn logs of which it was constructed were bullet proof, and it would be neither difficult nor dangerous for four resolute men to hold the door against a much greater number of assailants.

While these thoughts were passing through his mind, a sound was heard above the tempest, which sent a thrill of anxiety and alarm through every heart. It was that made by a troop of cavalry as it came galloping across the field which lay between the house and the public road. To open the door now and attempt to escape, would send a gleam of light into the darkness, that would not only betray their presence,

but in all probability elicit a volley from the enemy's guns, and certainly lead to pursuit, and possibly to capture. Lindsay and Northrup, therefore, braced up the hingeless door by piling against it whatever movable furniture there was, while the host carefully covered the smouldering fire with ashes, and thus darkened the room.

XII

CAPTAIN LINDSAY LEAVES HIS CARD

THE horsemen having now reached the fence separating the house from the field, dismounted and gathering noisily about the door, demanded admission by beating it, and calling loudly upon those inside to open at once. Lindsay and Northrup drew their revolvers, but the Tennesseean putting a finger to his lip to enjoin silence, whispered:

"Too many; if we bêat 'em orf thar'll likely be mo'. It won't do to fight; they'll burn the house."

Then turning to his wife he continued:

"Keep 'em out as long as yo' can."

A thundering blow now came against the panel and a voice cried, angrily:

"Open, confound yo'! Air yo' goin' to let us freeze?"

"Who's thar?" said the woman.

"A detachment of No'th Ca'liny cavalry; open the do' at once, or we shall break it down."

"I'm a lone woman; please don't bother me this time o'night; thar is a nuther house half mile furder down the road."

This appeal was greeted with a yell, and a voice added: "If you're a lone woman thar's th' mo' room for us; let us in, an' we'll keep yo' company — quick or down goes the do'."

While this dialogue was progressing the Tennesseean removed a board from the floor of the cabin, and by a motion directed his guests to descend into the dark space thus revealed. They disappeared in an instant, and being quickly followed by him, the wife closed the aperture above them.

The cellar, so-called, into which they had thus been introduced, was simply an irregular pit, where vegetables were stored during the winter months. The crevices in the floor admitted sufficient light to enable the four men to see indistinctly, while they could hear perfectly all that might be said in the room above.

"Well, I'll be blest if I endure this any longer," said a voice on the outside. A succession of heavy thumps against the door

now threatened its destruction, when the woman called out, "I'll undo the do'."

A moment later the room was filled with men who crowded and jostled each other about the hearth.

"Tom," said a voice, "start up the fire; we may as well be comfortable while we stay."

"It's too infernal bad for the ho'ses," said another, evidently the voice of a kind-hearted fellow who loved his beast, and could not rest happily while it suffered.

"Yes, but it would be no better if we stood in the storm with them," remarked another, evidently the voice of one who liked his own comfort far more than that of his horse.

"Madam, have yo' no shed or shelter where th' ho'ses can stand?" said one who spoke authoritatively.

"A pore one, sah," replied the woman.

"Where is it?"

"Back of th' house, sah."

"Tom," said the officer commanding the detachment, "yo' get this fire to roaring while we put the ho'ses under shelter.

Come, boys, let us see to the poor beasts, and then look out for ourselves."

There was a rush for the cabin door, the fence was thrown down, the horses led to the rear and placed under a long, low shed covered with straw. The woman was correct in saying it was a poor one, but it afforded partial shelter from the storm, and was far better than none at all.

When the party returned to the cabin, the fire, stimulated and expedited by pine knots, had broken into a cheerful blaze. The officer said to the woman kindly:

"Go to bed, madam, we shall disturb yo' as little as possible"; and then as if a new thought occurred to him, he continued: "Where is your husband?"

"In the army, sah."

"What army?"

"Gineral Breckenridge's, sah."

"Glad to hear it. I wish all east Tennesseeans were there. We shall be with him to-morrow, if the creek can be forded in the morning."

"Is there gwine ter be a battle, sah?" said the woman with apparent anxiety in her tone.

"There has been one, madam. General Breckinridge whipped the Yanks at Morristown the other day, and is driving them pell-mell back to Knoxville."

Then, turning to his men, he continued:

"Four hours to rest; make yourselves comfortable, boys, while you can; as soon as it is fairly light we shall be off, and make up by hard riding for time lost."

"No tidings from Captain Locke when yo' left Iredell, Frank?"

"None, Captain Lenoir."

"He went north, doubtless; that was a strange capture."

"Very," returned young Brevar, who took the defensive at once; "and yet as far as I can see, Captain Locke was in no wise to blame. We were breathing our horses after a hard ride, and resting ourselves on the east bank of the Yadkin, where we had no more reason to suspect the presence of an enemy than in the streets of Salisbury or Lexington."

"That Lindsay is an obstinate, desperate devil," said Lenoir. "He was one of those who tunneled out of Libby."

"Indeed!"

"He had made six unsuccessful attempts to escape," continued Lenoir, "before he finally succeeded. For over two months he was confined in the dungeon, then transferred to Salisbury and put on the chain gang, but he would not work; finally, in retaliation for a confederate officer who was arrested as a spy and executed by the Yankees, he was being conveyed to Richmond to be hung, when he and another prisoner leaped from the train and made good their escape."

"Where did you learn this?" asked Brevar.

"From an officer at the prison in Salisbury."

"Well, the strangest thing connected with the whole matter," said Brevar, "is the fact that he and his companion not only captured me, but rescued my sister."

"The deuce you say; why how was that?" exclaimed the good looking captain, opening his eyes in astonishment. "I heard, of course, of Miss Alice's abduction and of her rescue, but I supposed McLean was entitled to the credit of the latter."

"Not at all. It seems these two Yankee officers were stealing over the hills of Watauga, when they came suddenly on Rutherford and three or four of his gang, disarmed them, took their horses, conducted Alice back some fifteen miles to Vale Crucis, where they put her in charge of Davy McLean."

"It was a gallant thing for the Yanks to do," said Captain Lenoir, thoughtfully.

"Yes, but stranger still is the fact that they intended to conduct her to Iredell, and would doubtless have done so had they not accidentally hit upon McLean's party."

"Why, d—n the Yanks, I am afraid there is something human about them after all. What sort of men did Miss Alice say they were?"

"As gentle and courteous in their treatment of her as if they had been her brothers," returned Brevar; "and when, out of regard for their personal safety, she urged them to turn back, one of them replied, 'No, we cannot abandon you at night in this wilderness'."

"The deuce you say; why d—n 'em I don't believe they are Yanks."

Captain Lenoir and young Brevar watched and slept by turns, while the soldiers, stretched on the floor with blankets for pillows, were lost in profound sleep, or reveling in pleasant dreams. They had started the morning before from Boone to join General Breckenridge in the valley of the French Broad, or that of the Holston, but had been delayed first by swollen streams, then by the darkness and storm, and, finally, by an impassable creek, until they were now fully twenty miles away from the place they had expected to reach six hours before. They had, however, done their best, and like experienced soldiers, saved their horses as much as possible, so they might be reasonably fresh when called upon to perform the more important and dangerous duties incident to the service.

Lenoir was probably twenty-six years of age; a handsome man, of medium stature, whose dark eyes, black flowing hair, long beard, and pointed moustache, suggested the dashing soldier and expert horseman that he was. Proud of his family, generous to a fault, fairly educated, and peculiarly sensitive to any reflection upon his honor, he

was probably a fair representative of the higher type of the southron.

The Lenoirs and Brevars had been neighbors and friends for generations, differing occasionally on minor questions, but united on all that related to the rights of states, and the institution of African slavery, and ever ready to strike hands to maintain the honor of the commonwealth to which they had been educated to believe their highest allegiance belonged.

Rising from his seat Lenoir pushed the door of the cabin carefully aside, as if he desired not to disturb the sleepers, and stood for a moment on its threshold. The rain had ceased; the sky ,however, was still filled with heavy clouds, drifting rapidly with the wind. It was the first gray of the morning, when objects, as they appear, one by one, to the observer, seem like new creations, or substances that have suddenly stepped out of the limitless void beyond.

"It is still too dark to undertake to ford the branch," said he to himself; then replacing the door, he returned to the bench before the fire, and soon dropped off into

a half wakeful sleep, from which he did not soon recover.

Brevar, who had been enduring, rather than enjoying, a fitful slumber, awoke, finally, to discover it was broad daylight. Arousing the captain, the latter called hastily upon his men to turn out. As soon as blankets, haversacks and guns could be conveniently arranged, the company abandoned the cabin, and sought the shed where they had left their horses four hours before. They found the rude shelter, but not the horses. Amazed and chagrined beyond measure by his misfortune, Captain Lenoir regarded the vacant space for a moment in silence, and then burst into a torrent of vindictive and blasphemous abuse of the persons who had perpetrated the outrage.

Brevar, who was cooler than the captain, possibly because he bore less of the burden of responsibility, detected a paper pinned to a post or pillar of the shed. It was an old envelope which had been used in the transmission of a letter. Upon examining it he found the postmark of the town where it had been mailed, and the following address:

CAPT. LUDWELL LINDSAY, U. S. A.
PRISON,
SALISBURY, N. C.

Handing it to Lenoir, that gentleman read it, and then turning it over, found on the reverse side, in rude characters, evidently traced in the dark, the following:

"Captains Northrup and Lindsay, U. S. A., leave compliments for Captain Lenoir, and regret their inability to pay their respects to him in person."

Looking into the faces of his men with a confused and anxious expression, they had never recognized in him before, Lenoir said quietly:

"Beaten and disgraced at last, by — George!"

XIII

THE HOME GUARDS

AS soon as there was a lull in the room above indicative of drowsiness on the part of the inmates, Lindsay, who had become weary of lying in a position so cramped and uncomfortable, took occasion to investigate the place in which he was concealed, as fully as it could be done without attracting attention from those whose notice he was at present most anxious to avoid. Crawling cautiously to the side of the cellar, where he thought he detected an opening which led to the open air, and finding he was not mistaken in his conjecture that an escape could be effected with the utmost ease by way of the outside entrance to, or exit from the pit, he touched Northrup, Cæsar and the Tennesseean, and one at a time, and very cautiously and quietly, they abandoned their place of concealment, and stood for a moment in whispered consultation in the rear of the cabin. The storm had in no degree abated, but the moon had

been up an hour or more, and the intense darkness had been softened by its influence to such an extent that objects very near were barely distinguishable. Moving hastily to the shed, they discovered, by the sense of touch, rather than that of sight, that it contained twelve horses.

It required but a few minutes time for each of the four men to gather up the reins of three bridles and start across the field. As they were leaving, Lindsay stopped and placing his horses temporarily in the care of his companions, returned to the shed, as if to assure himself there was nothing more to take, and after a minute's absence rejoined them.

The Tennesseean was perfectly familar with the premises over which they traveled, and, after proceeding some distance in the open field, he let down a panel of worm fence and led the party to the public highway. Following this, they soon reached the branch whose swollen waters had been found impassable some hours before, and moving directly into the stream, with the apparent intention of crossing to the other side, but really for the purpose of eluding

pursuit, they wheeled suddenly to the left, and proceeding against the current for twenty or thirty yards, abandoned the creek altogether and struck off over the hills.

The road on which they were now traveling was a rough and rugged one, rarely trodden by other human feet than those of the proprietors of the few mountain farms to which it led. It was, in fact, a cow path rather than a public highway; but all its tortuous windings and abrupt acclivities were familiar to the Tennesseean, and, although progress was necessarily slow and difficult, the party jogged steadily on without halting until sunrise.

They had now reached the summit of an elevated ridge, and found a comparatively broad area of level ground on which the forest trees had been girdled by the axe and thus deadened. It was enclosed by a rude fence, constructed of brush and logs, and had been used as a pasture field. Entering this enclosure, the party dismounted and permitted the horses to feed on the grass which stood about them in abundance. Having spent an hour in thus resting and refreshing the poor beasts, the men remount-

ing, descended the ridge, and soon came to an upper ford of the same stream they had abandoned when they left the public road for the mountain path they were now following. Crossing the branch here, they changed their course sharply to one bearing sou'westerly, and proceeded on a line parallel with the valley of the French Broad, and as nearly in the direction of Knoxville and Chattanooga as it was possible to travel in a mountain country.

The rain had ceased; the wind had subsided also, and as the sun, now shining from a clear sky, gave warmth to the wet earth, a dense fog arose, mantling hills, ridges and ravines, presenting the few objects visible to the fugitives in an unsubstantial and ethereal way, suggestive of the ghostly realms of the dead, rather than the solid domain of the living. As the day advanced, however, the fog gradually grew lighter, and finally softened to a mist, and then faded to an almost imperceptible vapor, which lingered and mingled lovingly with the autumn foliage, and hung about the crests of distant ridges in pleasant contrast with the deep blue of the sky.

The little party were descending a long hill by a circuitous pathway, when, as they were nearing the bottom, the challenge to halt was given by an unseen sentinel. The Tennesseean, without checking his horses in the least, uttered a word in reply, unintelligible to his companions, but undoubtedly satisfactory to the guard, for they were allowed to proceed without further interruption. Having now reached the bottom of the hill, they came upon a narrow strip of level land, with a little stream running along one margin of it. Here was a camp of loyal Tennesseeans, or bushwhackers, as they were called, many of whom recognized the guide, and manifested great surprise at the number of horses in his possession.

"Hello, Dakin," said one; "whar all them hosses come from? Air they sesesh?"

"Yas," replied the guide; "they did belong to 'em, but air ours now."

"Yo' took 'em?"

"Yas," replied Dakin.

The Tennesseeans, gathering about Lindsay and Northrup, regarded them with cu-

rious, but kindly interest, and at last one said:

"When did yo' git away, boys?"

"Nearly three weeks ago," replied Lindsay."

"Whar from?"

"Salisbury — near Salisbury."

At this point a man elbowed his way hastily through the little crowd, and, laying his hand heavily on Lindsay's shoulder, said in a loud, cheerful voice:

"How are you, Captain Lindsay?—and you, Northrup? I am surprised and delighted to meet you again. How are you both?"

It was McLean. "Come," he continued, as he led them by the hand, "I know you are hungry, and that you have had a tough time of it since you left North Carolina. Why, Cæsar! you here, too?"

"O, yasser, yasser; dis nigga sticks to 'em, Massa McLean; dey can't git away from dis chile, sah."

"Fortunately," continued McLean, "we can give you a good dinner of venison and corn bread. Go with me. You have both been well?"

The officers replied affirmatively and soon entered a little booth constructed of the branches and bark of trees, which afforded a very fair shelter from wind and dew, but little, if any protection against a beating storm or continuous rain.

"Now, gentlemen," continued McLean, "make yourselves as comfortable as possible. There will be something for you to eat in a few minutes."

McLean had just returned from the battle-field of Morristown. He had, some days ago, hastened to the federal camp to apprise Gillem of the danger which threatened, but had reached him at too late an hour to enable that officer to retire his command in safety. The rebels, under Breckenridge, had pushed boldly up and confronted the union troops with a largely superior force, and when, after nightfull, General Gillem concluded to withdraw, the enemy had the shrewdness to accept the movement as a confession of weakness, and so followed him with such confidence and vigor that in the battle which ensued he lost his artillery, many of his men, and was driven pellmell back to his fortifications.

"It was, after all," said McLean, "not much of a battle, and the loss sustained by our side, not by any means serious, for Gillem's command, all told, did not exceed fifteen hundred men. But Breckenridge is making the most of his victory. He is fully aware of the importance, at this time, of reviving the drooping spirits of the confederates, for in this way only can he prevent desertions from the ranks of his own army and check the growing union sentiment in east Tennessee. He has, therefore, issued a Napoleonic proclamation, in which he dilates upon the prowess of his army, the importance of the recent victory to the confederate cause, and assumes, with confidence, that this is but the first of a series of magnificent successes which will result in the complete recovery of east Tennessee from the hands of the invaders. With pretense of magnanimity, he also informs the loyal Tennesseeans, whether in or out of the federal army, that if they will now return to their homes, he will afford to their persons and property the fullest protection.

"The effect of all this has been, first, to dispirit somewhat the loyal Tennesseeans;

second, to induce the disloyal of east Tennessee and west North Carolina to believe a decisive battle has been fought, and an important victory achieved, which must lead to the abandonment of this section by the federal army. These false impressions of the magnitude of the affair have been so thoroughly disseminated that many citizens of Tennessee and North Carolina have been attracted to the battle-field, partly out of curiosity to witness the scene of the struggle, and partly with a view to comfort and care for the men supposed to have been disabled, and partly, possibly, to give countenance and encouragement to those at the front who have rendered what they are pleased to regard as a service of the utmost importance to the South."

"Well, Mr. McLean," said Lindsay, "the important thing for us to know just now is how to reach our lines."

"A week ago," replied McLean, "I should have advised you to follow the mountains southerly, until you reached a point opposite Knoxville, and then turn squarely to the west; but now I think it would be safer to take a shorter route, and proceed from

this point directly toward Cumberland Gap. As the attention of the rebels is centered upon Knoxville, you will cross the valleys of the French Broad and Holston sixty miles to the north of them in comparative safety."

"Captain Northrup," inquired Lindsay, "when will you be able to resume the journey?"

"At once, if you will permit me to limp along slowly."

"Would it not be safe to ride part of the way?" asked Lindsay, to whom Northrup's lameness suggested the captured horses.

"Until to-morrow morning, certainly," replied McLean. "If you conclude to start this afternoon," he continued, "I shall accompany you as far as Nolechucky River, and can see you safely over that stream. There is a Union settlement in its vicinity, from which I have obtained many recruits for the national army. In fact, the homes of many of the men now in this camp are in the neighborhood of the ford; that is to say, in the coves, patches of valley land

and on the hills within a radius of five miles."

It was perhaps three o'clock in the afternoon when Lindsay, Northrup, McLean and Cæsar selected four horses from those captured from Captain Lenoir, and started westward. They followed the little stream which rippled near the camp for a short distance, but as it soon diverged abruptly from the course they intended to pursue, they abandoned it altogether, and now entering upon a well-defined path, followed it over ridges until nearly nightfall, when they struck the public highway, and, giving rein to their horses, proceeded toward the valley of the French Broad.

The sun had disappeared. The evening twilight had grown prematurely dark under the great trees which lined the margin of the road. The horses were spirited and eager, while the riders, glowing with that exhilaration which results from pleasurable exercise, and prompted by a desire to cover as much ground as possible before the sun rose on the morrow, finally gave them all needed encouragement, and so went dashing along the highway as if pursuing,

or pursued. They had not proceeded many miles, however, when, in turning a sharp bend which the road made in order to avoid a jutting hill, they came suddenly upon a considerable party, who like themselves were mounted, and traveling westward.

To turn back now would only serve to excite suspicion, and if the party thus unexpectedly overtaken was armed, and such as they deemed dangerous, their sudden change of course would probably induce pursuit, and possibly lead to capture. In the interim between discovery and the time required to bring their horses to a more moderate pace, a hurried consultation was held, and, in accordance with McLean's advice, they continued on their way as if they entertained no desire either to avoid observation or attract it.

"Yo' ride fast," remarked a gentleman, petulantly, against whom McLean jostled while making an unsuccessful effort to restrain his impatient horse.

"Yes," replied McLean, sententiously; "I ride a fast horse."

"It does not follow, I think, that a man must ride fast because he rides a fast ho'se," retorted the man, angrily.

"No," replied McLean, "but it does follow that a man may ride fast when so mounted."

Without awaiting reply, McLean followed by his friends, threaded his way along the margin of the road with as much expedition as possible, in order to get beyond the company, and, in so doing, discovered that the party consisted of twenty armed men, three ladies and a small retinue of servants, male and female. The men were evidently not regular soldiers; on the contrary, they appeared more like armed citizens, who, while pursuing generally the vocation of civilians, were prepared in an emergency to perform military duty. There were many organizations of this character in the South, made up in part of those who were physically unfitted for continuous service in the field, and in part of those whose public or private engagements forbade any lengthened absence from their homes. This McLean concluded, was a company of home guards, going probably, to visit the scene

of the recent Confederate victory, or possibly having some other and more important object in view.

As McLean struggled forward to the head of the column, and endeavored to pass it, he attracted the attention of the commanding officer, who mistaking him in the darkness for one of his own followers, said sharply:

"Do yo' wish to speak with me, sah?"

"No, sir."

"Keep yo'r place in the ranks, then."

"I have no place in the ranks," replied McLean; "I am not a member of your company; I am simply endeavoring to get by you."

"Pa'don me; how fa' do yo' go on this road, sah?" said the man, softly.

"To the Nolechucky; I reside near that river, sir."

"Can yo' tell me how fa' we ahr from th' Bucksho'n tavern?"

"A little more than one mile, sir."

"Thank yo'; we expected to have reached it befo' nightfall, but th' road ov'r th' mountain was rough and I think we unde'estimated th' distance somewhat, sah."

The cavalcade now emerged from the shadows of the over-hanging forest, and entered upon an area of level, cultivated lands. It was still in the gray of the evening, and the landscape lay spread out before them in the twilight like a faded, or fading picture; its features indistinct, incomplete and colorless. The light, however, was sufficient to enable the eye to recognize familiar objects when near at hand, and the man with whom McLean had been conversing no sooner caught a glimpse of his countenance than he drew a revolver and commanded him to surrender; but McLean had been too often in situations of similar danger to be taken wholly by surprise; in fact, he had been carefully on his guard throughout, and before the officer had fairly given utterance to his last word he dealt him a staggering blow in the face, and, then giving rein to his horse, lay down upon its back and galloped safely away.

Lindsay, who rode next to McLean, realized instantly the necessity for immediate and decisive action, and striking his horse sharply on the flank he bounded for-

ward with such violence as to throw the head of the column into temporary confusion, and so facilitate his escape. Shots were hastily fired after him, but in the darkness and excitement of the occasion, fell harmless.

Northrup had been as quick as the others to discover the dangers of the situation, but he was too far behind his companions to pass the enemy at a single bound, as Lindsay had done, and the guards having recovered somewhat from their surprise now closed around him in the narrow roadway, and made escape impossible. He struggled gallantly for a time, but after receiving a stunning blow on the head, and a slight flesh wound in the shoulder from a pistol ball, he realized that beset on every hand as he was, the conflict was a hopeless one, and so surrendered and was dragged from his horse, and disarmed.

Cæsar, wise man, saw at once that discretion was the better part of valor and dismounting, stood quietly by the roadside until the turmoil ended.

XIV

THE BUCKSHORN TAVERN

IT would be no exaggeration, certainly, to affirm that Northrup's present misfortune was the most poignant he had ever experienced. Having traveled so far and so safely, he had come to regard his escape as a thing assured. In fact, the moment he set foot on the crest of the Alleghanies, all anxiety as to the successful termination of his journey disappeared, and he felt the thrill of exultation which flows from a dearly won, yet decisive victory. But now, after nearly three weeks of labor, exposure, suffering and danger, when, as he believed he was about to reach the lines of the national army, and be permitted once more to greet dear relatives and kind friends, he was, by this unlucky mishap, to be remanded to a dungeon probably, and certainly to months of monotonous and loathsome prison life. For the first time, therefore, during the period covered by this narrative, he lost temporarily, that pleasant and equable tem-

per habitual to him, and exhibited in its stead a spirit of fierce, impatient anger.

"Who ahr yo', sah?" demanded the commandant, authoritatively, when Northrup was brought before him.

"It would have been at least humane," replied Northrup, "and certainly in accordance with the rules of civilized life, to have made that inquiry before assaulting me."

"Why did yo' not surrender when commanded to do so?"

"Why should I have done so, sir," returned Northrup, defiantly, "are not peaceable citizens permitted to travel the public highways unmolested?"

"Peaceable citizens ahr, but public enemies ahr not," retorted the officer. "Who wah th' men who escaped?"

"That question, my dear sir, is worthy of his Excellency, Judge Lynch, who first hangs his victims and then tries them. You should have slain the gentlemen you refer to, and then organized a court to ascertain their names and whether they deserved to die."

"As to one man of yo'r party, sah," returned the officer hotly, "I can bea' witness

both as to his name, and to th' fact that he is a traitor and deserves death."

"If you know that, you know far more than I — as much, indeed, with respect to the merits and demerits of men as the Creator."

"Gentlemen," said the officer angrily, "put this man on his ho'se, guard him securely, and let us move fo'ward."

"Captain Dustin," said a voice quivering with excitement, "who was the man whom you recognized?"

"Th' most active and dangerous traitor of No'th Ca'lina, Davy McLean."

"Indeed," replied the lady, "I know Mr. McLean, Captain Dustin; he is wrong of course in siding against the south, but he is honest."

"I am astonished to hear yo' speak thus favorably of one who has fo' fou' yea's been so bitter and indefatigable in his effo'ts to encourage disloyalty to his state, and to disgrace and ruin the south," replied Captain Dustin, warmly.

"He is doing what he believes to be his duty, Captain Dustin," she replied; "he is,

of course, wrong, but he thinks he's right, sir."

"Do yo' know who his companions on this journey ahr?"

"With all kindness to you, Captain Dustin, I prefer not to answer. I may say this much, however, the gentleman you hold as a prisoner rendered me a very great service at the hazard of his life."

"If yo' will assure me, Miss Brevar, that from yo'r personal knowledge of the prisoner, it is my duty as an officer and a true man to the south to release him, he shall be permitted to go free."

"I cannot speak as to your duty, Captain Dustin." And then after a pause, she added: "I find it difficult sometimes to decide questions of duty for myself."

There was evidently a struggle going on in the mind of the fair Alice, between her sense of personal obligation to the prisoner, and the duty which she owed to what she conceived to be her country. In such a contest, however, she felt quite sure all minor considerations should be made to yield to the general good. She regretted exceeding-

ly that Northrup had been captured, but still more that he was an alien and an enemy, and felt if she were to connive at his release, she would to some extent compromise her honor as a loyal citizen of the south.

There are times, indeed, when gratitude for personal favors, when friendship, and even life itself, are as nothing in comparison with the infinitely higher interests involved. Was not this such a time? When fathers, husbands, brothers and sons were abandoning everything for the great cause, was it not her duty to make sacrifices also? If the prisoner and her brother, or her best friend, perhaps, were to meet in battle they would not hesitate to slay each other; would it not be better to render the meeting impossible, at the cost even of an apparent obliviousness to personal obligation?

It was a distressing strait to be in, but with her convictions of duty, there was but one solution of the problem, and that was against the prisoner. An exhibition of gratitude at all serviceable to him, would be an act of disloyalty to her country.

Northrup realized at once the embarrassment under which she labored, and sought to relieve her.

"Captain Dustin," said he, "I had the honor to render Miss Brevar a service, which no gentleman could have hesitated to perform, and for which she is under no obligation to me whatever. I trust she will allow no considerations of a personal character to interfere with the discharge of what she may conceive to be a public duty."

Captain Dustin making no response to this, Miss Brevar said:

"I differ with you, sir, as to the extent of my obligation to you, but agree with you fully as to my present duty."

They had by this time reached the Buckshorn tavern, a rough country inn, but one which for many years had borne the reputation of affording good dinners and clean, comfortable beds. The presiding genius of this hostelry was a busy, energetic woman of forty, who not only managed to receive and entertain her guests, but to supervise with a vigilant eye every department of her household, and give to the rude surroundings that air of homelike cheerfulness and

comfort so rarely found in places of public entertainment, and yet when found, so delightful to the travel-worn and weary.

The edifice was constructed of unhewn logs. The main building comprised two large square apartments on the ground floor, one of which was used as the reception room or parlor, and in this there was a bed for the accommodation of the more favored guests. The other was the dining room, and between the two were large fireplaces set in rough wooden mantels. The upper floor was divided into two apartments, also, in both of which there were as many beds as the space would accommodate without rendering them inaccessible. Adjoining the main building in the rear, was one of smaller dimensions, the lower floor of which served the purpose of a kitchen, while the upper room was used as a sleeping apartment by the family whenever the better rooms were required for the entertainment of guests.

The three ladies and their servants dismounted and were ushered into the reception room by the landlady; while the gentlemen, with the exception of Northrup, and two of the citizen-soldiers who had been de-

tailed to guard him, accompanied their horses to the stables in the rear. After a few minutes delay, Northrup and his guards followed the ladies and their attendants into the parlor, if it may be so called. The bed which occupied one corner of the room had been made the receptacle of hats, wraps, and such other articles of exclusively outdoor apparel, as are usually worn by female travelers in the autumn season.

Miss Brevar's companions—one of whom was the wife of Captain Dustin, a stout handsome woman of thirty; the other a sister of Captain Lenoir, a petite, bright-eyed brunette of twenty, were seated before a cheerful fire, quietly discussing the incidents of the journey, and rejoicing over the fact that the fatiguing exercises of the day had ended. Alice was standing near them, with hands clasped behind her and head slightly bowed as if in deep meditation. The glow on her cheek, the droop of the lashes of her brown eyes, and her apparent obliviousness to surroundings, indicated that the silent but exciting struggle between the impulses of a generous heart, and the dictates of an exacting conscience, was still in

progress, and that the parties to the controversy spurned all thought of capitulation, and would accede to no terms of compromise.

When finally aware of Northrup's presence, she awoke as from a reverie, advanced with out-stretched hand to meet him, and said cheerfully, but not without a suggestive tremor in her voice:

"I fear you have been loitering on the way."

"The delay has been unavoidable," he replied, as he took the proffered hand and held it for a moment in his own, "but now that I have been recompensed for all the discomforts and detentions of the journey, I feel assured it was providential."

She did not seek to know how he had been repaid; for the little scene in the cove near Vale Crucis two weeks or more ago, gave to his words a significance that rendered all explanation superfluous.

In an undertone, inaudible to her companions, she said:

"I am sorry, but cannot aid you to escape. Do you for any reason want to con-

ceal your name, and the fact that you are a federal?"

"No; no advantage, so far as I can see could be gained by that."

"Mrs. Dustin and Miss Lenoir," said Miss Brevar, "Captain Northrup, of the federal army." The ladies rose from their seats and responded gracefully to the captain's salutation. "To-morrow," she continued, "we shall have the pleasure of introducing Captain Northrup to General Breckinridge."

"That would, indeed, be an honor," replied the captain, pleasantly, "but if entirely agreeable to you, I should prefer to seek the acquaintance of General Breckinridge and his army friends under more favorable circumstances and on something like equal terms."

"I fea', Captain Northrup, yo' would fa' wo'se in such an inte'view than in th' one suggested by Miss Brevar," returned Mrs. Dustin laughingly.

"That might be the case Mrs. Dustin," responded Northrup, "the warm receptions accorded to us by your friends are not

always exempt from accidents to life and limb."

"Yo' have had some experience of southern hospitality, Captain Northrup?"

"Considerable, Mrs. Dustin. I have been an inmate of southern prisons for four months, and it looks very much as if I were fated to occupy one for some months longer."

"You ahr on th' wrong side, Captain Northrup," remarked Miss Lenoir, with a twinkle in her black eyes.

"Yes; the wrong side of the picket line, Miss Lenoir," returned the captain with a smile.

"No, no," replied the young lady pleasantly, "yo 'ahr on th' right side of th' picket line, but on th' wrong side in th' war."

"When did yo' escape from prison, Captain Northrup?" asked Mrs. Dustin, curious to ascertain something of the young man's history.

"I did not escape from prison, directly, madam; I effected my escape while en route from Salisbury to Richmond, by leaping from a railroad train."

"How long ago?"

"Nearly three weeks, madam."

"And yo' have been on th' way so long?"

"Yes, much of the time wandering among the hills and ridges of this mountain region. By the way," he continued turning to Miss Brevar, "I encountered your brother again last night."

"Indeed," she exclaimed in a tone of eager inquiry; but at this moment Captain Dustin entered the room followed by many of his men and the conversation was interrupted.

"Captain Dustin," said Miss Brevar, "this is Captain Northrup, of the federal army."

"I suspected, Miss Brevar, that he was a federal. But, captain, I would like to know, sah, whar yo' obtained th' ho'se yo' wehr riding?"

"We took twelve horses from Captain Lenoir's company, and that is one of them."

"That is Mr. Frank Brevar's ho'se sah."

"Very likely," replied Northrup; "Mr. Brevar was of Captain Lenoir's party, and we appropriated all the horses it had."

"In battle, sah?"

"O, no, sir; we were not in condition, either as to numbers or equipment, to do battle. We took the horses from a shed

while Captain Lenoir's party was seeking temporary shelter from the storm in an adjacent cabin. It was a legitimate reprisal from the enemy, but not one calculated to cover us with glory."

Supper being now announced, Captain Dustin escorted the Misses Brevar and Lenoir to the dining-room, while his good wife, who had taken a liking to Northrup, kindly put him in position where he could not avoid offering her his arm.

It was a substantial dinner to which they sat down, consisting of ham, turkey and chicken, accompanied by a liberal supply of vegetables, all served smoking hot. The servants belonging to the ladies of the party, with Cæsar, having up to this time rendered service in the kitchen, now took their places around the table and waited upon it, while the landlady stood at a sideboard from which she dispensed rye coffee, observed the movements of her subordinates, and made many unnecessary but kindly suggestions to her guests.

Northrup's *vis-a-vis* was the fair Alice. Her clear complexion, shapely face, sparkling eyes, brilliant tresses, easy and grace-

ful bearing, made a picture he thought, surpassing in loveliness even the ideal which had now been enshrined in his heart for—a century it seemed to him. She had told him, indeed, with a deliberate coolness which bore evidence not only to the absence of all passion, but to the sincerity of her utterance, that there was no hope for him. But he would not believe this; in fact, he felt that he could not believe it without surrendering at once all that made the future of interest to him. He had met her at an unfortunate period, when the prejudices of section were aroused; when the distress and bitter animosities resulting from a fratricidal war were dominating thought, and banishing from the heart all gentle sentiments and generous impulses. He would, if God spared his life, seek her when time had mellowed and hallowed the sorrows of the present and a prosperous peace had robbed disappointment of its bitter pangs.

Miss Brevar, remembering as she did the scene at Vale Crucis, could not fail to observe now, that, in the far away and dreamy look which he at times unconsciously fixed upon her, there was evidence that his

thoughts had abandoned the present, and were busily engaged in fashioning the magnificent castle of the future, where she was to reign as the queen of love and beauty, while he rendered homage as became an humble but devoted knight. It was a pretty dream, and the dream of a handsome, brave and generous man; still his way and hers lay far apart; so far, indeed, that long before they could by possibility be brought together, new faces would have replaced hers, and newer and happier scenes obliterated all recollection of the rough and rugged ones through which he had so recently passed, and with which she was associated in his memory. Still, she would be glad to be assured of his success in life. Indeed, she would hazard almost anything to aid him, save the great cause, involving as it did the independence of the South, to the success of which the property, honor and life of every true Southron were pledged.

It will not do to conclude, however, that the company assembled about the hospitable table of the Buskshorn tavern was altogether a silent one. Mrs. Dustin,

whose amiable partiality to Northrup she did not attempt to conceal, and indeed, there was no reason why the honest woman should have sought to do so, had, after repeated attempts, finally succeeded in engaging his attention. He was a novelty to her; the first of the Federals she had met, and she proposed to make the most of him. She was a jolly, kind-hearted woman, who had a taste for society and politics, and a touch of sentiment withal.

"Yo' do not think, Captain Northrup," she said, "that yo' will ever succeed in conquering the South?"

"I trust the sober second thought and good sense of the people of the South, Mrs. Dustin, will finally induce them to abandon the struggle."

"No, no, sah; we can't live with th' No'th, sah. They do not unde'stand us; they meddle with ou' great institutions, sah; they insist upon controlling us, and we shall not submit."

"Pardon me, Mrs. Dustin, I think you are in error. We have sought control simply in the way provided by the constitution, and have always submitted gracefully when de-

feated. We demand nothing now of your section, but what we willingly concede to it. We shall not permit the Union to be dismembered. Once recognize the right of a State to secede and we shall have as many petty nationalities as there are States, and between these there will be perpetual feuds. At the North we desire peace above all things; but we feel satisfied a permanent peace can only be secured by preserving the Union."

"That all sounds very well, sah, but when people cannot live together amicably, it is th' part of wisdom to separate. Th' territory is large enough fo' two great nations, and there will be two, sah."

"It may be possible, Mrs. Dustin, but I think not. You have as yet but little idea of the power and resources of the North."

"But no power, sah," returned Mrs. Dustin, emphatically, "can crush six millions of people determined to be free."

"In all kindness and in all sincerity, permit me to assure you the North has no desire to crush you, and to add that the war is nearly ended; six months more must complete the work, and then the Southern

army will disband, every Southern soldier seek his home, and the flag of your fathers and mine be the only one recognized as an emblem of authority. When that good time arrives, I trust you and Captain Dustin and the ladies present may turn your backs on North Carolina for a while and come to Boston, for I feel quite sure if you knew our New England people you would like them better than you do. Promise me you will do this, if the prediction I have made comes true."

"We might safely pledge ou'selves to go to th' no'th pole when that happened," responded Mrs. Dustin, cheerfully; "oh, yes, we will make th' promise, Captain Northrup. Yo' will consent to it, Captain Dustin?" she asked, turning to her husband.

"Certainly, if yo' wish, my dea'. I am quite suah we might safely pledge ou'selves to go anywhere in such a contingency."

"Very well; remember the promise," said Northrup, as they rose from the table.

Captain Dustin proceeded to make his detail for guard, and the members of his company not on duty retired separately or in detachments, as inclination prompted

them, to the rooms on the upper floor. The landlady was busily engaged preparing for an early breakfast, while the servants were clearing off the table with a view to spreading mattresses in the dining-room. Captain Dustin's duties being ended for the day, he seated himself in an easy chair and silently considered some great scheme, probably for the speedy extermination of the Yankees.

Alice and Miss Lenoir sat by the hearth in silence. They had been in the saddle since early morning, and perhaps needed rest; they certainly manifested no desire to engage in conversation. The vitality of Mrs. Dustin, however, was still unimpaired. Looking up at Northrup, who, with his elbow on the mantle, stood just above her, she said:

"Yo' a'e quite su'e, Captain Northrup, it would be safe for us to venture so fa' into Yankee land?"

"Quite."

"Yo' would bear no grudge against us because we captured yo' and returned yo' to a rebel prison?"

"No, we should forget all that in the pleasure of your society, Mrs. Dustin."

"Yo' would heap coals of fire on us, and so magnify yo'self, sah," returned Mrs. Dustin, with a laugh.

"Really that view of the matter did not occur to me," replied Northrup; "be frank now, Mrs. Dustin, and admit that your conscience rebukes you for interrupting my journey; but for this meeting I would have been many miles on my way home—would have eaten my Christmas dinner, as I trust you will, surrounded by a pleasant company of relatives and friends."

"How long since yo' w'ar at home?"

"Three years; it seems an age to me."

With a sigh, and in a tone which bore evidence to her sincerity, she said: "I am afraid, Captain Northrup, yo' can never fo'give us fo' this detention."

"My capture is one of the accidents common to war. I have perhaps reason to be thankful you did not slay me outright. In fact, I am not sure that I regret my capture as much as a good soldier should do, for it has afforded me an opportnity to—"

"To do what, Captain Northrup?"

"To make your acquaintance, Mrs. Dustin."

"I fea' that is but small compensation to yo'," returned the good woman, thoughtfully.

The guard now entering, notified Northrup that he was expected to occupy a mattress in the dining room. In taking leave of the ladies, he sought an opportunity to say to Miss Brevar, in an undertone:

"Do not forget the interview at Vale Crucis. I shall return to North Carolina after the war."

"*With* Mrs. Northrup."

"No, no; for her.

"Good-night."

"Good-night."

XV

THE INVISIBLE ARMY

IN the morning when Captain Dustin's company started on the journey westward, the sun was just rising above the great mountain wall behind them. The sky was cloudless, the air crisp and bracing. A hoar frost had fallen over night, and lay like a web of jeweled gossamer over forest and field. The hills and ridges were glowing in the level beams of the sun, and long, slender shadows checkered the open grounds. It was, in fact, a good morning; a morning when the heart of youth exults and is hopeful; when the brain quickens with pleasurable thought; when the muscles bound with eagerness to be employed, and the imagination grows riotous and builds castles of marvelous beauty.

"Good morning, Miss Brevar."

The white plume nodded, the eyes brightened, and the cheeks flushed with new beauty, if that indeed were possible, as she

looked saucily at Captain Northrup and responded:

"Good morning, sir."

"I hope you are quite well?"

"Thank you."

"I must leave you, to-day, I suppose?"

"Nobody can tell, Captain Northrup; you disappear and reappear so unexpectedly, and so mysteriously. When we do not know even that you exist, you come out of the wilderness and act the part of a good angel, and then when we think you gone forever, you ride down upon us in the dusk of evening like a — a highwayman."

"Do you remember what I said to you last night?"

"Did you speak to me last night? I thought you were talking all the time to Mrs. Dustin."

"No; I sought an opportunity to say a word to you."

"Well, then, I must have forgotten it."

"Shall I repeat it?"

"No, no; tell me something good. How do you like brother Frank's horse? That horse was bred on the Brevar planta-

tion, and so was the one I am riding; mine is the better horse. If Captain Dustin dared trust you out of his sight, I would join you in a horse race, and run away from you."

"No, you could not do that; if my horse failed I should dismount and catch you on foot. I would not permit you to escape me just now. I do not care for horses, but —."

"You would not do for a mountain country like west North Carolina; the roads are too rough for carriages, and besides carriages are dull. They may do well enough for a city, but when you get into the country, there is nothing like a good horse, and what I mean by a good horse is one that will carry you ten miles an hour, and make you feel as if you were on wings, and flying through the air. Did you ever ride after foxes, Captain Northrup? That is grand sport; the yelping of the hounds, the hurrying of the riders, the leaping of fences, logs and ditches, and finally, the thrill of the last dash when the hunters gather in to be first at the death. It is very exciting, sir."

"Now that the fox is dead, let us not talk about him any more. I shall leave you to-day and I want to tell you that —."

"That you do not like fox hunting any more than you care for horses. Well, I am sorry for you, Captain Northrup. Captain Dustin," she continued elevating her voice, "at what hour shall we reach Greenville?"

"About twelve o'clock, Miss Brevar."

They had been riding leisurely for some time and were now descending a narrow ravine, which separated two thickly wooded ridges. The road followed the course of a turbulent stream, and in many places the side hill had been cut away in order to afford the necessary width for the passage of a vehicle. The stream lay some twenty or thirty feet below the roadway, and the banks descending to it were almost perpendicular. The forest on the right was within a few feet of the horsemen, and that on the left, across the ravine, could not have been over thirty yards distant. While Captain Dustin's company was in this situation, they heard the sound of a horn away to the rear, and then of another, as if in response

some distance to the front, and again of still others on each side of them.

Captain Dustin halted his company and looked back inquiringly, as if he thought some of his men might be able to give a satisfactory explanation of these signals; but as no one offered to do so, he started forward again. The party had proceeded not more than twenty rods, however, when they were startled by a voice from the dense woods on the right, shouting:

"Captain Northrup!"

"I hear you," Northrup called back, for he recognized the voice of Lindsay.

Then a great yell was heard — possibly from the voices of fifty men, and possibly from five hundred, for it was impossible to tell when one voice left off and another began — to the right, front and rear of Captain Dustin's party.

The guards immediately put themselves in readiness for battle, but up to this time they had seen no one, although the woods were apparently alive with men.

"Captain Northrup," now came the voice of Lindsay, "tell the ladies and servants they will be permitted to go unharmed

either to the front or rear, and to go at once, for we have no time for delay."

If Captain Dustin could have seen his enemies, he would doubtless have felt more at ease, even if their number had been far greater than it was. But his men were crowded in a narrow roadway, bordered on one side by a chasm, on the other by thick woods and steep banks. He could not tell, certainly, where a volley might not come from. It was impossible for him to make a dash and so get away, for in that narrow, winding passage half of his men, in the confusion and panic of a flight, might be crowded off the road and go tumbling down the precipice along which it ran. Turning indecisively to the rear for suggestion or advice, his eye fell on Alice Brevar, and he asked:

"What do yo' advise me to do?"

"I cannot advise you, Captain Dustin," she replied. "Do you think they have guns and mean to fire at us?"

"Why don't the women go to the rear?" shouted the voice from the woods, impatiently. "We shall give you a volley in a minute."

Mrs. Dustin evidently realized all the veritable and imaginable terrors of the situation, for she now turned to Northrup, and in a voice hardly intelligible, said:

"Fo' God's sake, captain, get us out of this terrible difficulty; these ahr yo'r friends, save us!"

"Captain Lindsay!" shouted Northrup.

"Well," responded the voice of the unseen man.

"Do you desire simply to secure my release?"

"That is one of our purposes."

"Let me beg that it be the only one."

For a few minutes there was no response, and it was evident the unseen parties were in consultation. Finally the reply came:

"Let Captain Dustin restore to you your arms, then return with his command to the Buckshorn tavern, and remain there until twelve o'clock; after that time, he will be permitted to proceed on his way to Greenville, unmolested."

"Captain Dustin," said Northrup, "you have heard the terms. I shall not presume to advise you, but I know the man who speaks, and I am quite sure he has force

sufficient to execute the work he has undertaken. In releasing me you will do no great harm certainly."

The captain paused a moment, as if in doubt, but after looking into the face of his wife, and giving his men an opportunity to remonstrate if they saw fit, he said to Northrup: "Yo' ahr free sah;" and Northrup called back to Lindsay:

"Captain Dustin agrees to your terms."

While the home guards were moving to the rear, Alice Brevar lingered for a moment until they had quite disappeared beyond a bend of the road; then giving her hand to Northrup, as if to bid him farewell, she said:

"You thought me ungrateful yesterday, when I could have had you released, but did not?"

"No," he replied, "I knew you were acting from a conviction of duty."

"Well, I am glad you are now free, and again thank you for your kindness to me."

"Tell me that I may sometime return to North Carolina with the hope of meeting you again, and receiving from you the great boon I asked."

"No, no; you will soon forget me. Good bye."

But Northrup, still retaining her hand, replied: "I will never forget you — never! Would you have me do it?"

As they looked into each other's eyes the face of the fair Alice paled, and then flushed, and then without a word, and perhaps unconsciously, the golden tresses mingled for an instant with the brown, and in some mysterious way — by a delicious system of telegraphy used for ages, but still new, and never to be fully understood, the glad intelligence thrilled through Northrup's heart that he had won a marvelous victory; just how it was done, he neither knew nor cared.

Lifting their heads they discovered McLean and Lindsay standing near, the flush deepened on the girl's face, and she stammered:

"Are you here, uncle Davy?"

"Yes, you rebel tom-boy," replied he, with affected sternness.

"Captain Lindsay," said Northrup, looking down upon his comrade, "I am heartily

sorry to have occasioned you so much trouble."

"I don't believe it," returned Lindsay, "I have seen too many unhappy men to be deluded by the statement that you are one."

"Here," shouted McLean, lifting up his hand in a declamatory way, as if to challenge the attention of the world, "Here is a type of the coming peace. The Bay state and the old North state have struck hands together —."

"Nay, more than that, McLean," interrupted Lindsay.

"And kissed in token of perpetual peace and love."

And then the two men took off their hats, and swinging them high in air, cried: "Hip, hip," and the silent woods, or possibly the bushwhackers concealed therein, took up the yell, and grew jubilant and vociferous again, and the men whose duty it was to blow their horns became infected with the noisy spirit that was abroad, and winded them with a vigor equalled only by those who are accustomed to blowing their own.

Amid this tempest of rejoicing, the fair Alice, bending so low that the white plume of her hat touched the good steed's mane, said "Good bye," and putting whip to her horse quickly disappeared.

As the three men, now joined by a score of others, stood together for a time in consultation, Cæsar came dashing down the road at break neck speed, with his face shining like varnished ebony, and a broad grin revealing ivory that, thus far, had sustained no damage from frequent contact with roasted 'possum. Northrup, hailing him as he rode up, said:

"Really, Cæsar, I had forgotten you, my friend."

"Dis nigga didn't forgot yo' sah, an' some udder folks hasn't forgot yo' nudder. Hyar am somethin' fer yer, Cap'n Northrup," and Cæsar handed him a package wrapped carefully in a handkerchief of embroidered linen, on which the name, "Alice" was elegantly stitched. Unfolding it he found a silken purse, containing coins of gold and silver, and two diamond rings.

"What can this mean?" he exclaimed, in surprise.

"It means," replied McLean, "that just now you are penniless, and may need what she does not."

"I cannot take it."

"You cannot avoid it."

XVI

CONCLUSION

NOW, if the writer of this truthful narrative were to fail to tell how Stoneman came over the hills from Kentucky, and reinforcing the troops at Knoxville, swept up the valleys of the French Broad and the Holston like a whirlwind, defeating and scattering Breckenridge's army as if it were but chaff; and how Lindsay and Northrup, falling in with these gallant, loyal troopers were put safely and rapidly on their way northward; and how, on Christmas day, at high noon, as the Lindsay family, on the Lindsay farm in God's country, were seated, with a goodly company of relatives and friends, to a good Christmas dinner, two young men appeared unexpectedly in the doorway, and how old Donald Lindsay jumped to his feet and shouted, "Ludwell!" and then grasped the young man's hand; and how the mother, with tearful joy, fell upon her son's neck and kissed him, as old Donald took Northrup's hand and gave him

cordial welcome; and how, as the father turned to his son again, the mother turned to Northrup and kissed him also — and how a great shout went up from the guests gathered around the heavily laden board — if, in short, the faithful chronicler omitted this he would fail to discharge a very pleasant duty.

And, then, it should be told, also, how two young men traveled on to Boston, and how, on New Year's day, as the shadows were gathering in one of the quiet streets of that great city, they rang the bell at the door of a stately mansion built years and years ago, and how, when the servant responded to the call, she was so surprised, that she gave a little shriek, and how, following her into the still unlighted hallway, the young men turned aside into an elegant, old fashioned parlor, and how, pretty soon, a woman, whose hair was frosted, but whose body was hale, came into the room, hurriedly, and throwing her arms about Northrup's neck, kissed him and wept for joy, and returned grateful thanks to heaven for his safe return; and how a handsome girl, named Catharine, alias Kitty, came

bounding in a minute later, and with tears and laughter, welcomed her brother home again, and then turned to that great gawk, Lindsay, and bowing low, put the softest and whitest of hands in his and bade him welcome also. In short, if the writer were to fail to suggest all this, he would leave the best part of his story untold.

Then, again ,it should be put down how, in the fall of 1865, when peace had come again, and that greatest of rural artists, the famous Jack Frost, had given to the foliage his most delightful touches, Colonel Henry Northrup, the Colonel's mother, and his sister Catharine, alias Kitty, and their servants, with a wagon load of trunks, drove leisurely from Salisbury toward the hills. And how they halted by the way, while Cæsar, dressed in sober black, and like a gentleman very much indeed, ran across the field to Tom McKorkle's cabin, and returned with Tom, and Tom's wife and children, and how Northrup shook hands with all, and how Northrup's mother loaded them with gifts; and how the tears came to Kitty Northrup's eyes when Tom McKorkle's wife said solemnly: "De Lo'd bress yer

honey, en be wid yer always, an' all ob yo' uns." If, in short, we were to fail to suggest all this, the story would be very incomplete.

And then it should be told how they journeyed onward leisurely over hills and valleys until they turned into the avenue leading to the Brevar mansion, and how old Hugh Brevar, who felt quite young in fact, and his good wife, who felt still younger, met them at the doorway and gave them hospitable welcome; and how Miss Kitty and the fair Alice became sisters at once in thought and feeling; and how, after a time, Colonel Northrup encountered Alice alone, and by accident, of course, as the evening shadows were gathering in the parlor, and thereupon captured her by a dash, and held her fast. Well, just what he did, it would be a breach of confidence to tell; but this much may be said, he took from his pocket a silken purse and from it two old rings, and returned them to her with many thanks, and then produced another having a great diamond setting which seemed to be a crystallization of morning sunbeams, and while putting this ring on

the fair Alice's finger, her face was lifted up to his in a most tempting, tantalizing way, and his was lowered somewhat, and just what then occurred the writer would lose utterly the confidence of all young ladies if he were to tell.

We should not forget to mention, also, how that big-fisted, awkward, rural rooster, Colonel Lindsay, of the Miami valley, came across the country by way of Chattanooga into Iredell, and how he presented himself in unexceptionable apparel at the Brevar home, and how Miss Alice received him with many demonstrations of joy, and made much of him; and how Catherine, alias Kitty, was offish and silent for a time, but finally taking pity on the poor man, made up with him, and said they would be friends; and how he insisted they should be something more, and how after a while, but a long time after the meeting at Brevar's the persistent fellow had his way, and at the same time his wife.

And then, at last, it should be recorded how, amid a gay company of relatives, friends and neighbors, Colonel Northrup and the fair Alice were, with all due solem-

nity, made man and wife; and how Davy McLean was among the first to congratulate Mrs. Colonel Northrup and wish her joy. And how, after a tender parting from North Carolina friends, the newly married couple traveled on to Boston, and then took ship for an extended tour abroad. If, in short, the writer were to fail to suggest all this, his story would not end as well as all true stories should.